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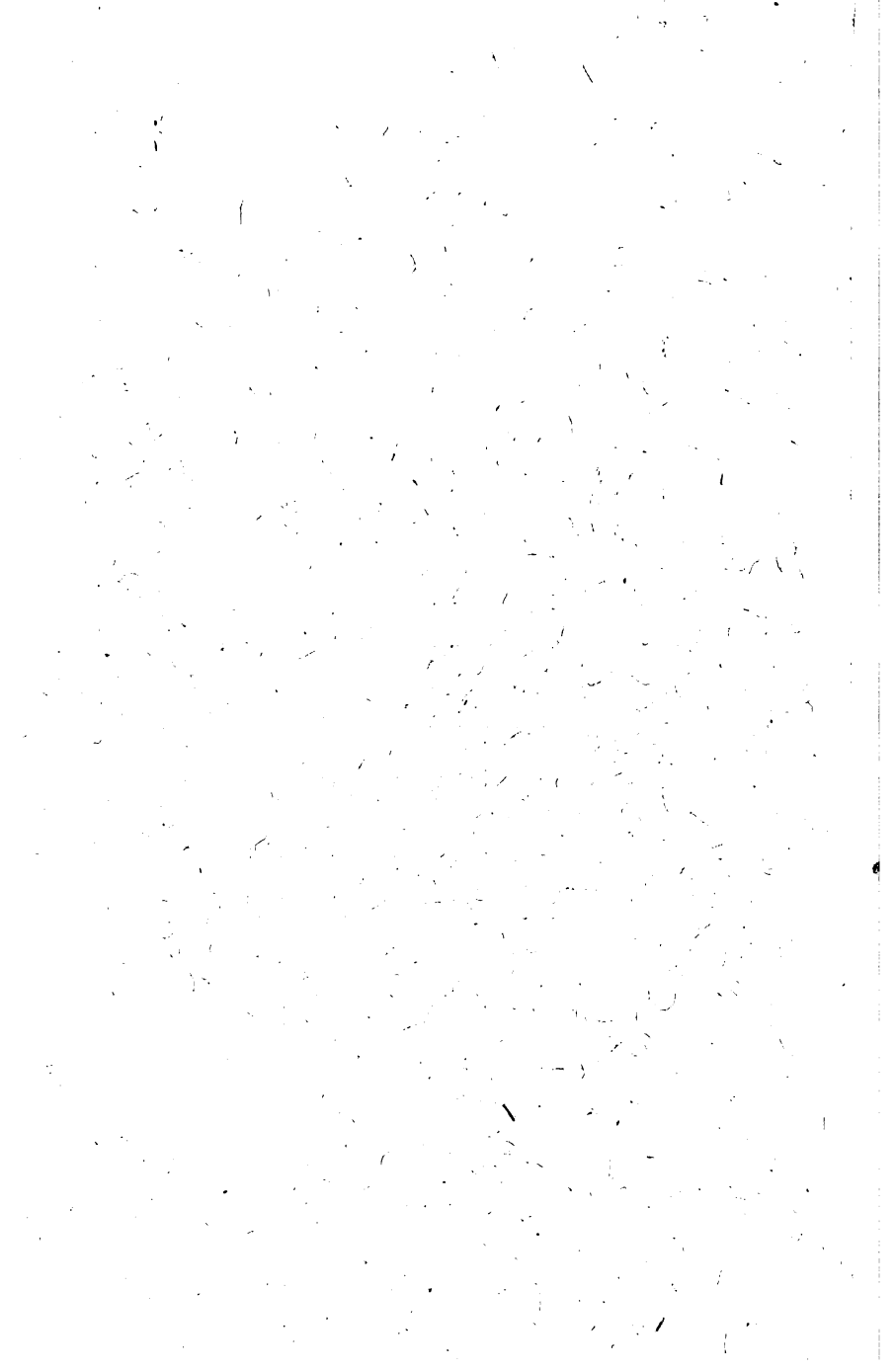
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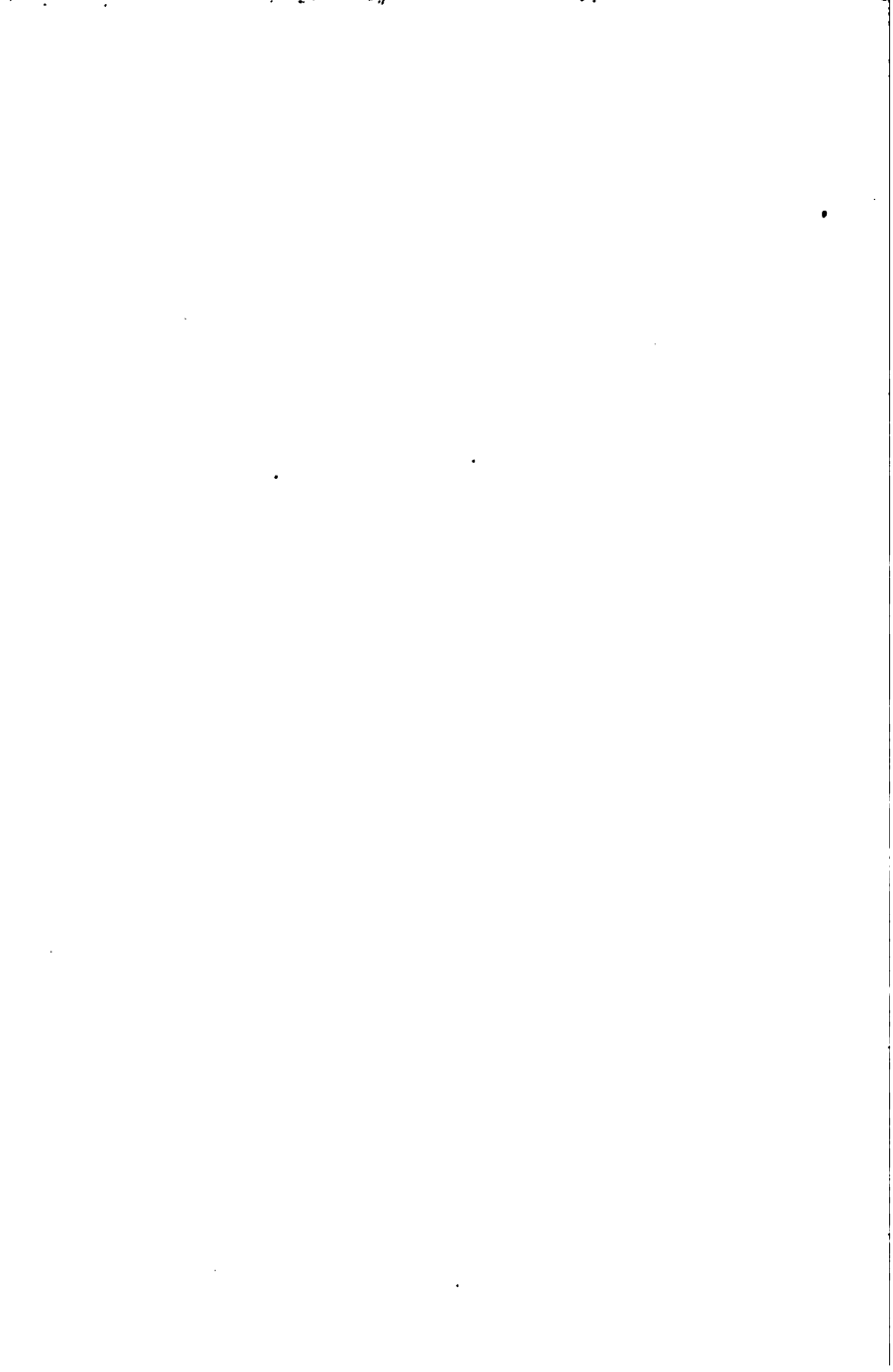
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**THE PRISONER OF  
ORNITH FARM**





# THE PRISONER OF ORNITH FARM

BY

FRANCES POWELL Case.

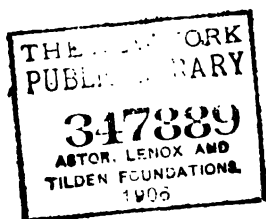
AUTHOR OF "THE HOUSE ON THE HUDSON"

"Ne faites jamais couler les larmes, Dieu les compte."

NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1906

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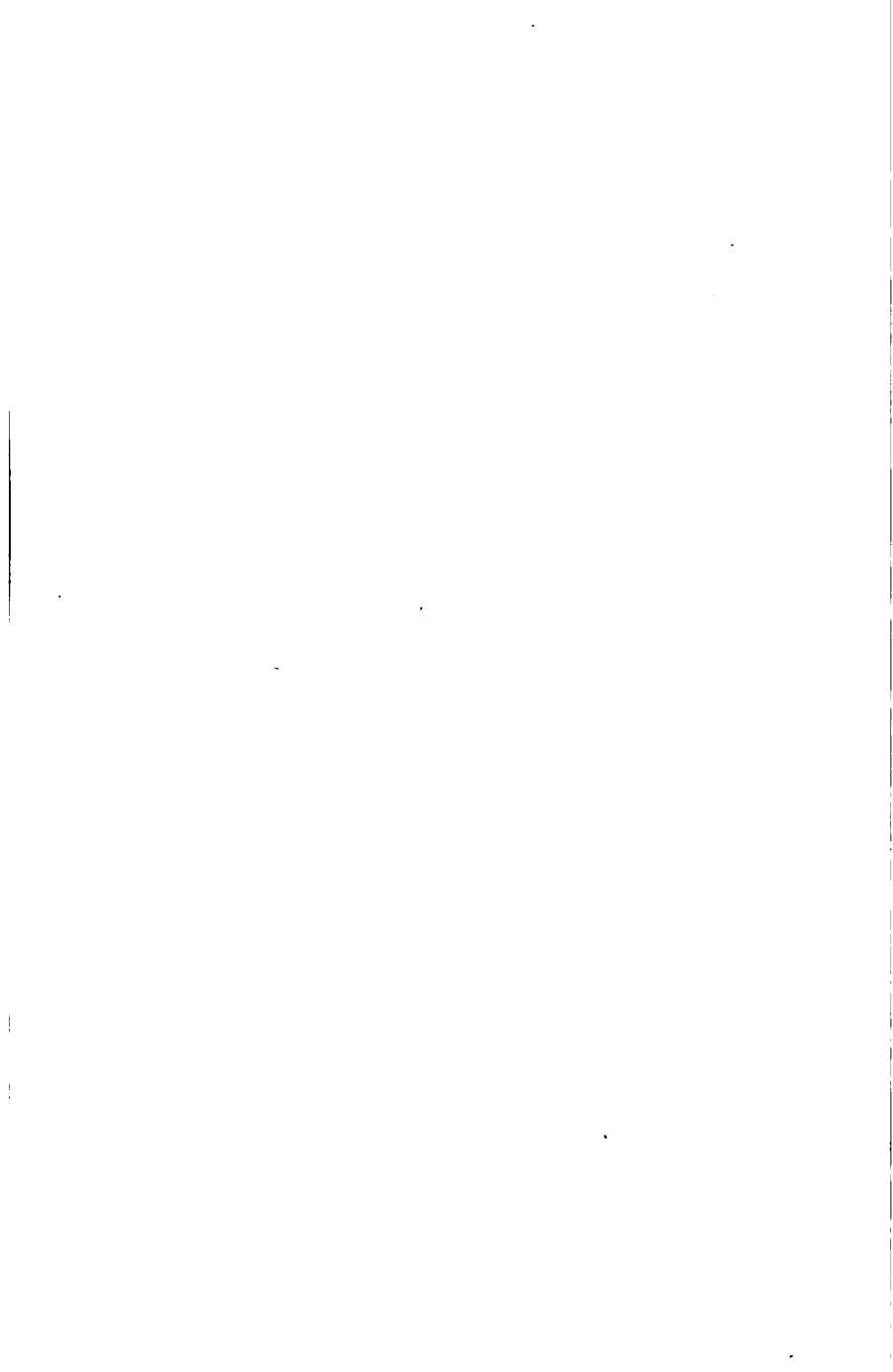
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**THE PRISONER OF  
ORNITH FARM**



# THE PRISONER OF ORNITH FARM

## I

"An' that's the end of the story," said my nurse in her comfortable voice, "an' it's glad I am that little Proserpina got safe home to her poor mither! Now, my lammie, do you run about a bit. You've sat long enough for one while."

We were seated close under an old stone wall, Katie and I, on the broad stretch of grass that bordered one side of the country road. On the other side was more grass, then flat gray rocks, and below these a curving beach of cobblestones. The little waves plashed so softly upon the rough shore, they but made a rhythmic accompaniment to Katie's pleasant voice; and while I watched them I could almost believe that I saw Proserpina's friends, the sea-nymphs, peeping up at me from beneath the clear green water.

Then I fell to thinking of my mother. Had she seen the mermaids? Had she stayed with them awhile before going to heaven? For the fate of many who go down to the sea in ships had befallen my bright young mother. The yacht—*Mary's Hope*—upon which she and my father had set sail for the West Indies, four years before, had never been heard from. The *Hope*, one of the life-boats of the doomed vessel, had found its way ashore. But it came alone, and empty; so told no story, save the pitiful one of shipwreck.

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Hope was my mother's pet name for me, since she, too, was a Mary, and had no wish to give up her name even to her little daughter. And I, of course, had to be christened Mary. There had always been a Mary Carmichael ever since the first had been chosen by the Queen as one of her four Maries.

"There was Mary Beaton, Mary Seaton,  
And Mary Carmichael *and me*"

So runs the old ballad in which we Carmichaels believe.

I looked wistfully at the sea—was I wrong to love it when it had treated my parents so cruelly? Because of their fate I might never bathe in its cool green waves, or sail upon its shimmering blue surface. Aunt Caro said that the sea would bring me misfortune. A great fortune-teller, a gypsy, had bidden her guard me from it until after I had passed my twenty-first birthday. After that there would be no danger, but before—?

Aunt Caro's guardianship ceased when I should become eighteen, since then I was to marry Max Errol. This arrangement had been made by my father and Mr. Errol when I was born. If Max or I objected, when the time came (when I should be eighteen and he twenty-five), we might break the agreement. The two fathers were close friends, and their lands—on the Hudson—"marched," as the Scotch say; so their wish was perhaps but natural.

My aunt, widow of my father's only brother, took her duties as guardian very lightly; as, indeed, she took everything, from the bringing up of her four boys, my cousins, to the ordering of her household. She was a handsome, dark-eyed creature, liking to see all those about her comfortable and happy—if she were not obliged to bestir herself in order to accomplish this. She gave us all our own way, and when

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her sons took undue advantage of their freedom she shed a few placid tears, and told them not to forget that she was a widow.

"Your dear father thought you would take care of me," she would say in plaintive remonstrance, "but I don't see how you can, if you grow up reckless and imprudent!"

As they were really good boys they seldom let their wild spirits carry them too far. They felt responsible for their mother's comfort; she was so amiable—so helpless.

"So selfish!" Katie grumbled, under her breath. But this I set down to Katie's jealousy. For gentle as was my aunt's authority Katie resented it, she having been my mother's nurse before she was mine.

I adored my handsome aunt. I liked the way in which she treated me, always talking to me as if I were grown up. She gave me all I asked for—save only a bathing-suit and a boat. And we were by the salt water so much! Aunt Caro—a New England woman by birth—loved the New England coast. Every summer our stay by the sea grew longer; and every summer my desire to bathe in it, and sail upon it, grew more intense.

On that particular afternoon, in late September, eighteen hundred and seventy, I had a great longing to be in one of the white-sailed boats off shore. Aunt Caro, with the boys, was out sailing. However, I was to be eight years old to-morrow, I said to myself, striving for consolation, and eight from twenty-one left—how much? Why was it that reading was such an easy matter, and arithmetic an impossibility? When I was twenty-one I would bathe all the morning and sail all the afternoon; and Katie, poor Katie, who now must always stay ashore because of me, should bathe and sail too.

I looked with great affection into the strong face



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of my dear nurse; then wondered, for the hundredth time, why she would strain her hair back so tightly from her forehead. Every hair seemed in danger of snapping. Should I speak to her of the future joys in wait for us, upon my twenty-first birthday? But my eyes fell upon the volume in her lap, and I forgot the sea. It was a blue book, with gilt lettering: "Tanglewood Tales." I read the title lovingly. I knew all the tales by heart. Sometimes Katie read them to me, sometimes I read them to myself. For two years I had read easily. I felt very old; I should be eight on the morrow! How old was Proserpina when Pluto had carried her away from her mother, from the kind sea-nymphs, from the flowers and the sunshine? It must have been so very awful, that descent underground!

I stood up and looked across the low stone wall into the meadow behind us; a wide-spreading meadow, with a grove of dark pines in a distant corner. On its farther side—it seemed very far away—tall spears of golden-rod, growing in a clump, were swaying to and fro in the sea-breeze. They looked very splendid. The sun, hanging low in the west, sent glowing shafts of light through the masses of yellow bloom, turning them into burnished gold. Never had I seen golden-rod so magnificent. I thought of the gorgeous flower that had tempted Proserpina away from her companions. I climbed over the wall.

"Don't go far, my lam'," warned Katie, who was knitting busily, "keep near hand the fence." And she fell to counting her stitches, "One—two—three——"

I did not answer. I intended to disobey. I wanted the golden-rod; it seemed as if it nodded to me from the distance. I walked slowly toward it. If only it did not grow so near that dark mass of pines! Then, looking in wonder at the beauty of the stately

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golden shafts, I forgot to be afraid. Was the plant enchanted? If I were to put my arms about its three tall spears and pull, what would follow? How foolish I was! Eight years old to-morrow, and pretending——

But what if the earth were to crumble away, and the hole grew larger and larger, and deeper and deeper, and——

I gave a great tug, expecting strong resistance from deeply embedded, close-clinging roots. Instead, they came away with such ease that, having braced myself to encounter opposition, I lost my balance, staggered back, and would have fallen had not some one deftly caught me just in time.

"Pluto!" I gasped in childish terror, as I glanced quickly up into the strange face bent close over mine.

"Pluto?" a rather harsh voice repeated inquiringly, as the owner of the face—a tall, powerfully built man—set me gently upon my feet, and looked at me with amused interest. "Ah," as his keen gray eyes noted the sprays of golden-rod that I still held tightly to my breast, "I understand! I have often heard of the beautiful Persephone, and of what befell her when she was gathering flowers. I only wish that I were Pluto, lovely child, and that I had all the gold and silver mines in the country at my disposal."

He thrust his hands deep down into his pockets and stared at me moodily. I examined him with half-frightened curiosity. I wished that I had been good, and remained near my nurse. The stranger must have been carrying his hat in his hand and have dropped it when he caught me, for he was bare-headed. He had very thick brown hair—much ruffled by the breeze—a brown mustache, and a long slightly aquiline nose. His light gray eyes had an odd greenish glint in them as he watched me. Thinking me still afraid, he smiled. His teeth were very white

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and gleaming. I forgot about Pluto; my mind was suddenly flooded with memories of Red Riding Hood. Then shame at my own foolish imaginings banished fear. What would the boys say did they know I had been so silly? I drew myself up haughtily, vowing that they should never know. I must say good-bye to this stranger politely; he had meant to be kind.

"I thank you for catching me," I said gravely. "I did not know that golden-rod had such weak roots. Good-bye."

I held out my hand to him; he took it in both his own. "Good-bye, little Proserpina," he said.

I blushed, mortified that he had fathomed my folly. I shook my head. "I am not Proserpina"—I made the announcement seriously, I dreaded being laughed at—"I am Hope."

A deep flush swept across the stranger's tanned face, his eyes flashed, he stooped, and looked as if he intended to kiss me; then, reading my unwillingness in my eyes, stood erect as before as he said: "If you are Hope, I refuse to say good-bye!"

At this juncture we were joined by Katie, who, very indignant with me, yet not wishing to scold and so betray my evil-doing to a strange gentleman, was too much flustered by contradictory emotions to do aught but bow stiffly to my companion and throw meaning looks at me. She laid a stern hand upon my shoulder and began to put on my coat.

"September's no summer, sir," she said at last, in solemn tones, "an' though the child was better wantin' her jacket an hour gone—for the day's been as mid-summer, so hot even—it's growin' chill now, an' the sun will be sinking soon."

"Hope carries the sunshine with her," said the stranger, smiling down upon me, "since she is crowned with it." He glanced admiringly at my

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hair that, cut short to please me, curled in tight rings all over my small head. "Hope is beautiful," he added, as if but announcing a well-known fact.

I did not know if he spoke of hope the sentiment or of me. Katie, however, received the remark as a compliment.

"Pretty is as pretty does," was the severe response, "an' it's far better to be good than pretty."

This awful allusion to my past misdeeds I thought unfair, and I was glad that the stranger, even while he listened politely, still looked at me as if he thought me a nice child. Presently he began to talk to Katie and, to my great surprise, she responded to his advances at once. Before many minutes had passed, she chatted with my new acquaintance as though he were an old friend. Katie, who was ordinarily called close-mouthed! She told everything concerning me. In a few moments the stranger had heard of the sad death of my parents, of my betrothal to Max, of Aunt Caro and her careless ways, and, lastly, of the infinite superiority of my mother's family.

"Talk of the ridin', is it?"—I had heard no question of horsemanship—"why, that child," pointing a proud finger at me, "can show the Carmichaels the way! But seven the day——"

"I shall be eight to-morrow," I piped shrilly, in eager interruption, but Katie paid no heed.

"Seven the day," she repeated, raising her voice to drown mine, "yet look till her! As well bare-back as in the saddle, as well standin' as sittin', and over the hurdles wi' the best—an' a crumb higher, a piece further, than Wild Will himself! Yes, sir, an' it's in the blood. Now then, my lam'," she turned to me, "say the bit piece I learned you, the bit verse your grandpapa—an' a grand jantleman he was, too—used to say." I looked at her, then glanced at the flowers I still held. She understood. "Not a word,

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if you'll say the bit piece—begin, now! Give here the flowers, an' act it out—singin'."

Glad to escape rebuke for my sin of disobedience thus easily, I gave her the golden-rod and began to sing—to a tune of my own making—this doggerel:

"One white foot—buy a horse,  
Two white feet—try a horse."

I ceased singing and pretending to mount an animal of whose good points I was doubtful, put the imaginary steed through a variety of paces, then took up my song again:

"Three white feet—look well about him."

I puckered my brows, lifted each foot of the horse carefully, passed a testing hand down the legs as though fearing to discover spavin or other defect, and so on to the end.

The stranger applauded, apparently as much astonished as delighted. Katie beamed with pride.

"Four white feet—go without him,"

I sang in solemn recitative; then, breaking into a lively measure:

"Four white feet, *and* a white nose—  
Cut off his head and throw him to the crows."

"An' that's the way *we* say it," said Katie, in her odd mixture of Scotch and Irish—an inheritance from Irish father and Scotch mother—"but the bairn knows the common givin' of the poetry. Go on, my lam'."

I docilely repeated another version of the old belief:

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"One white leg, inspect him;  
Two white legs, reject him;  
Three white legs, sell him to your foes;  
Four white legs, feed him to the crows!"

"Not but what that's all nonsense," I said, as, after courtesying my thanks for the praise given me, I again took possession of my golden-rod. "Dexter's changed all that, you know. Dexter is just four years older than me."

"Tell about Dexter now," coaxed Katie, taking it for granted that my childish accomplishments must interest this outsider as much as they did her.

I looked at the stranger inquiringly. Would he think me a chatter-box? But the expression in his gray-green eyes gave me a strong desire to continue.

"Dexter," I went on, "was born and bred in our county. Sire, Hambletonian; mother, little black mare, daughter of American Star." (The boys saw to it that I should not hear—and so learn—the rough parlance of stable and race-course.) "Color, rich brown; four white feet, and a blaze in the face; fifteen hands and an inch high—'a big-little one.' He won in his first race, by half a dozen lengths, against——"

Here loud shouts and the tooting of horns from the shore told us that the sailing party had returned, putting an end to my recitations. Katie bade me say good-bye to the stranger. Moved by a friendly impulse—I was a friendly child—I offered him a sceptre of golden-rod. He broke off, however, but one of its tiny yellow fronds, and, putting this carefully away in a leathern case that he drew from his breast pocket, he gave me in return a small hard something, folded in a bit of paper. This he said I must keep until he came to ask it back again.

"I will not say good-bye," he spoke very gravely, "but *au revoir*. I cannot say good-bye—to 'Hope.'"

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He shook hands with me, bowed civilly to Katie, and, walking quickly to the grove of pines, disappeared in its black depths.

"Whatever is it, my lam'?" asked Katie, scanning with eager curiosity the folded paper in my small palm.

I opened it. It was a piece of an English coin—the half of a broken sixpence.

"Give it me quick, then," said my nurse in great haste, "till I run till him wi' it. It'll no do, takin' money fra' strangers. An' wha'tiver will Mr. Max say? A broken saxpence!"

But I held the bit of coin fast. "I shall keep it," I said imperiously.

"No, no," pleaded Katie, "a prisint from a stranger, my lammie, a——"

I interrupted her. "A stranger?" I said. "Why, Katie, you told him everything!"

"So I did, so I did," she assented, in great perturbation, "an' I'm not knowing why! He had a way wi' him—and a compelling eye. But, quick, give here the money, my child. It's not for a Carmichael to be given charity, like a beggar."

"Nonsense!" I cried indignantly. "What could I buy with a broken sixpence? I shall keep it." I backed away from her, putting the piece of coin into my small pocket.

Without another word my nurse walked away toward the road, beside which we had sat, at a great pace. I followed, sorry that she was displeased, regretting that I had taken my own way, yet oddly fascinated by my new possession. Why was it more important to Katie because it happened to be a sixpence, I wondered?

Katie climbed over the wall in such haste that several of its loosely piled stones followed her in a noisy avalanche. She paid no heed, but continued

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her way toward the small dock—a mere strip of planking upheld by iron stanchions forced in between the rocks—where Aunt Caro had just disembarked with the boys. I had to run at last to catch up with her.

“Are you very angry with me, Katie?” I asked, looking anxiously up into her stern face.

She did not answer, but taking my hand in hers pressed it firmly—a caressing pressure—as she hurried along.

The boys rushed to meet us. The twins, lads of thirteen, Wild Will and Sam the Cool (these nicknames because of their widely differing natures), came first. Between them they carried a basket, heavy with fish, the spoils of the day. Dodging around them, giggling, fisticuffing, lashing each other with long banners of the beautifully ruffled sea-weed, were the two younger boys, nicknamed respectively “Lord” Ronald and “King” Jamie. Max walked with Aunt Caro, carrying her wraps.

The twins set their basket down with a thump before us. Lord Ronald and King Jamie instantly offered me their sea-weed, and were dismayed to find that their wild use of it had damaged its beauty. Will’s quick eye noted Katie’s wrathful look.

“Why weep ye by the tide, ladye?” he inquired. Then, wringing his hands, he lifted up his voice in a howl of lamentation, in pretended sympathy.

“May this appease the angry goddess,” said Sam smoothly, as, selecting a large fish from the basket, he deposited it, with an air of abject humility, in the dust at her feet.

“What have you been up to, Hope?” asked the younger boys in an excited whisper, draping their sea-weed across my shoulders.

Here Aunt Caro, with Max, coming up, Katie herself gratified their curiosity.



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"Mrs. Carmichael, ma'am," she began firmly, "it's ashamed of myself I am."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Aunt Caro, looking frightened, "what has happened, Katie?"

"I met a stranger," said Katie solemnly, "an' I had a gabbing fit."

A deep silence, broken only by the soft splash, splash of the waves upon the beach, followed this strange announcement.

"Yes, ma'am," continued poor Katie, "a gabbin' fit. He were a jantleman, an' ast no questions, but he had a way wi' him and a compelling eye. 'Fore God, I tell't him everything I knew. An' he gave the child——"

She ceased speaking, looked down at me, then repeated in a lowered voice: "An' he gave the child——"

It seemed as if she dared not finish her sentence for fear of getting me in trouble. My heart suddenly swelled with sympathy.

"It was all my fault," I said, pushing myself in front of her, "and Katie has done nothing wrong. I ran away from her into the field and she had to come after me. He gave me the half of a broken sixpence. I am to keep it till he comes for it."

Wild Will burst into a shout of laughter, delighted laughter. I was glad some one was pleased—but mischief was apt to please Wild Will. Sam the Cool lifted his eyebrows until they almost vanished in his dark hair. The younger boys each stood first on one leg, then on the other, as if the uncertainty of coming events deprived every attitude of comfort and stability. Aunt Caro flashed an amused glance at Max.

"You had best accustom yourself, Max dear," she said softly. "It was bound to begin some time. Lovely little Hope!"

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Max stepped forward. "What did this man look like, Katie?" he asked pleasantly, in his kind voice.

"The jantleman," said Katie, with a strong accent on the word, "was, I judge, near hand twenty-sivin; he had a compellin' gray eye, a big masterful nose," and she gave a full description of the stranger's appearance. "He looked cast down like, as though the world had gone wrong wi' him, an' he was greatly ta'en wi' Miss Hope."

"Give me the sixpence, Hope," said Max gravely. "I'll find out where the man is stopping, and give it back."

"No," I said defiantly, "no, Max."

Max was handsome. He had a fine figure, clear-cut features, hair as fair as my own, and very intelligent gray eyes—there was no green glint in them, I thought, as I faced him. The boys admired him greatly, more because of his skill in all athletic sports than for his cleverness as a scholar. He was a very fine scholar.

"If you will give me the half sixpence," he continued, "you shall have Sergius Boris Best"—his wolf-hound—"for your very own."

I shook my head.

"Poor child!" murmured Aunt Caro, "her first scalp."

Max went on speaking; he acted as though we two were quite alone.

"If you will give me that man's sixpence, you shall ride Gray Griffith"—his favorite saddle-horse—"whenever you choose."

I laughed out. "If I coaxed, you would let me ride him without that," I said.

Max flushed deeply. No one spoke. The moment was recognized as a very solemn one by Katie and the boys. Aunt Caro was happy; the scene entertained her, and she loved to be entertained.

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But if I was a wayward child, I had a warm heart of my own, and seeing that Max looked really pained, it melted. I drew the half sixpence from my pocket and held it out to him.

"You may have it for nothing, Max," I said.

Max sought everywhere for the stranger, but in vain. He could not even learn his name, nor where he had been stopping. Aunt Caro took possession of the half sixpence, and it was put carefully away—to be returned later.

Katie never forgot the incident, and for a time spoke of it so often that it became one of my memories.

"You mind the day I had the gabbin' fit?" always prefixed the story.

## II

"Do you bide here, thin," said Katie, "an' I'll run till the house an' fetch your whup. And do you keep the bit cloak about you."

I sat down on a rock, under the dark pine near us, and told Sergius Boris Best, my companion, to lie down and rest while Katie was gone. The tall wolf-hound had grown old, he was now ten; and my short curls had grown long—I was fourteen. Although it was early June, when the steady warmth of summer had not yet come to the coast of New England, the day was uncomfortably hot because of a fiery land breeze—a really burning wind that made my cheeks feel feverishly hot, and obliged old Serge to loll his pink tongue very far out indeed. The scarlet flag on top of the large tent, discernible through a distant screen of firs, stood straight out in the breeze, showing to great advantage the piebald horse on its field of red, and the big white letters below, C. F. (Car-michaels' Folly).

I contemplated both tent roof and flag with great complacency; then, disobeying my nurse, flung off the long cloak of sapphire-blue silk that shrouded me to my feet and, standing up, transferred my admiring gaze to my own frock—what I could see of it. My short skirts were very full and very many. They were of white gauze, the outer one glittering with spangles—tiny silver stars. The waist was cut low, the sleeves short. Starting from the left shoulder a long spray of morning-glories crossed the front of the corsage, wound itself about my slim waist, and fell to the skirt's edge. Its trumpets, pale blue and

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purest white, were quite firm, since they were Parisian morning-glories, not natural flowers. I touched the spray lightly with regretful fingers, wishing that my flower—the flower of my month—were less fragile; then put up my hand hastily to find if the ribbon that kept my curls in check were in place. Katie had gathered them close at the back of my neck, and tied the pale blue ribbon firmly.

"They do dance of thimselves, I'm thinkin'," she had said, sighing over the refractory tendrils that seemed to take a mischievous pleasure in escaping her fingers.

As I lifted my arm to make sure of the ribbon, a clear whistle blew shrilly from the tent. Sergius rose quickly, if a trifle stiffly. Again the whistle sounded. The old wolf-hound looked anxiously up at me. He knew that he must obey his master's summons—it was Max who called—yet he did not wish to leave me unattended.

"Run along, you dear old thing," I said reassuringly; "Katie is coming back."

But the dog moved away unwillingly. Every motion of his lank body showed discontent. He strained his ears tight back to his long, thin head, in token of disapproval. I now ranked Max in his affection. He belonged to Max—but I belonged to him, and he desired to keep me constantly under his watchful eye.

Max had been absent for a long year. He had finished his college course, and Mr. Errol had rewarded him for carrying off many honors by giving him a year of travel. Max was seven and a half years older than I—he was already twenty-two! My cousins admired and looked up to him, making no secret of his being their ideal. But, although I shared this hero-worship, I was careful not to let its object discover my deplorable weakness. It was natural

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and very right, I thought, that the boys should bow down before one who was, in every way, their superior. In my case, however, it was different. I was a girl—*place aux dames!* Let Max kneel, if one of us must. So I held my head up as proudly as King Jamie, who had won this sobriquet because of his haughty carriage, and smiled no more graciously upon Max than upon all.

Before Sergius Boris Best had reached the scattered pines that stood between my resting-place and the distant tent, his heart failed him, and, turning, he bounded back to make sure that it was quite safe to leave me. I caught his dear head gently between my outspread hands; I kissed his long, kind nose, first on one side, then on the other.

"I love you," I said tenderly, "but you must mind Max. Remember, you are a very great person, indeed—and the great must never fail us. Your grandfather was just Sergius Boris; your father, Sergius Boris Better; but you, my darling" (I slid my arms around his neck), "are Sergius Boris *Best*. So when Max whistles, *go!*"

Quite understanding, proud of his name, delighting in my praise, the dog trotted resolutely away and disappeared among the trees. Left alone I spread my discarded cloak upon the rock and seated myself very carefully, fearful of crushing my gauzy skirts and marring their filmy beauty. Then I began to listen to the river, and forgot my bravery. It was such a fascinating little river! To a child brought up on the banks of the stately Hudson it seemed but a big brook. A light-hearted, wayward, babbling stream, either rippling gayly inland with the tide—its constant companion—or lamenting noisily when this playmate, summoned home, rushed tumultuously seaward. It was then that one heard both tide and river roaring angrily as they gained their freedom,

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and the wide stretch between the banks just below, by forcing their waters through the narrow rock-edged chasm over which hangs the ancient bridge of chains, the oldest suspension bridge in New England.

Moaning Pines, the neglected country seat that Aunt Caro had lately leased for a summer home, was but a narrow strip of acres between the high-road and the river. Its stretches of rough grass were separated from the country road by a tangle of trees and underbrush, while on the river side it boasted a magnificent ledge of rocks. And it was in the many crevices of these rocks that the grove of stately pines, which had given the place its name, had found firm foothold. The house was roomy and comfortable, commanding a pretty view of the ever-restless river. As it was several miles distant from the sea, Aunt Caro felt that in taking it she was keeping me sufficiently far from my hereditary enemy. For her belief in the gypsy's warning remained unshaken, although Mr. Errol and Max argued against, and the boys alternately scolded and laughed at, her superstitious fears. I was not allowed to learn to swim or to row—even boating upon fresh water being denied me. The boys would have preferred spending their summers at their home on the Hudson, since in winter they were obliged to leave it for school and college. And it was to quiet their discontent that Aunt Caro had consented to the purchase of the circus tent, that they might indulge in their favorite—some said foolish—amusement.

Years before, when I was but five years old, Mr. Errol, who was in sympathy with this fad of ours, had had a large rotunda built on his place. It had been supplied with a heating apparatus, dressing-rooms for the youthful performers, and luxurious seats for the very small audience. Only relatives and intimate friends were admitted, and each year

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the circle was more closely drawn. This was because I was a member of the troupe, and as I grew older Max disapproved more and more of my being seen by any save the favored few.

Mr. Errol and the old ring-master whom he had engaged to train us had been foolishly proud of the ease with which I learned my "business." But since I was supple, fearless, and had inherited the odd instinct that enables its possessors to manage horses—for instinct one might read sympathy, I think—there were really very few difficulties to be overcome. Then, too, I strove hard to acquire skill; defeat was galling to me. To this day I can remember my misery of shame when the piebald—an old circus horse, well accustomed to the vagaries of beginners—continued his routine-like canter around the ring, leaving me, a tyro, dangling high in air. I was perfectly safe, for I was fastened, by means of a stout leathern belt and long strap, to a horizontal bar. This, so long as I kept my footing on the piebald's padded back, gyrated, with the iron ring to which it was attached, around the central pole. But what was safety of limb to a proud child whose vanity was hurt? It was not many times that my awkwardness thus put me to shame. I took great pains, and soon excelled—to the delight of kind Mr. Errol and my teacher.

Max said that I must give up playing circus when I was sixteen. He was ring-master when at home. When he was away a steady, cool-headed old groom took his place. This was because Wild Will and I sometimes forgot that we were only playing, and took risks that made Mr. Errol stand up on his chair and roar out remonstrances, and sent Katie's apron over her head through fear of seeing us killed. Then it was that the ring-master called us to order. As our superior officer, we obeyed him—because of early



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training—when deaf to the voices of the family. Aunt Caro never distressed us by joining in these foolish alarms. She had full faith in our ability to take care of ourselves.

On that hot June morning we were to have a dress rehearsal. In the afternoon a grand performance was to be given in honor of Mr. Errol and Max, who had just arrived on a visit to Moaning Pines.

It seemed to me that Katie took a long time to find my whip. To amuse myself I began to sing—for, like some birds, I was born a singer. As I was very happy and free from care (ignorant of evil, and guarded from such hateful knowledge by the tender love of those who formed my world), I naturally chose to sing of sorrow, and to weave a melody of minor cadences for the heart-broken words that I sang.

Because I was Mary Carmichael I had been taught the greater part of the long ballad of Mary Hamilton. But the six verses that told the reason for her tragic death I was not to hear until I was grown up. Until then I must only know that her fate had been a cruel one, and so Katie—in her ever-varying dialect—declared:

“An awfu’ dishgrace to that graceless Queen Mary o’ Scots, wha lost her own head later, glory be an’ thanks to good Queen Bess, wha, God bless her, were but a bit fond thin of passin’ the pleasant word wi’ all men—wi’out first marryin’ one an’ thin t’other. An’ if (wearyin’ o’ thim) she did cut the heads from off some twa or three greedy lords wha were lookin’ for being made king (an’ not payin’ compliments an’ the like for the sake o’ true love alone), why not, I asks? Sure she was but a woman thin, when all’s said an’ done! An’ to know a man has laid a fair word on his lip but to land it out for his ain glory (through hopes of so gainin’ a kingly crown

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by marriage), why, a woman of ony spirit would ha' his head off an' she could—an' Queen Bess were a *queen*. So pay no heed, my lam', whin you hear folks say that Mary, Queen o' Scots, were a martyr. She thought o' hersel' only—niver o' the good of her people. An' belike she thought to wile away all hearts fra' the English Queen whin she crossit the Border in fear o' her life! An' it's I that am afther tellin' you that passin' the pleasant word wi' all does no harm, but the woman wha will be iver marryin' will know trouble." (Katie was unmarried.) "An' as for that poor ill-treated bit creature, Mary Hamilton, wha lost her life because o' her Queen's choosin' to wed bad men by the dozen—" Here Katie always came to an abrupt stop, to finish with this complaint against Aunt Caro: "Then it's I that am wishin' Mrs. Carmichael would be afther teachin' you these same verses hersel'! They bring the tears too near hand the eyes wid the sorrow in thim. But your Aunt Caro will no' cry hersilf whin she can find those for-  
ninst her to do it for her!"

So that morning I sang a chosen few of the many verses that I had learned when a little child—Katie had taught me sixteen.

"When I was a babe, and a very little babe,  
And stood at my mither's knee,  
Na witch nor warlock did unfauld——"

I broke off abruptly. Did I see something moving under the pines that rose, black and sombre, between me and the river? I looked intently. No, nothing but a swaying shadow, flung probably by some heavy branch. I recommenced singing, but went on to the second verse:

"But my mither was a proud woman,  
A proud woman and a bauld,  
And she hired me to Queen Mary's bower  
When scarce eleven years auld.

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"O happy, happy is the maid,  
That's born of beauty free!  
It was my dimpling rosy cheeks  
That's been the dule o' me;  
And wae be to that weirdless wicht  
And a' his witcherie."

Again I ceased my song. A robin, a very young robin, had alighted upon a low branch of my pine. I held myself motionless, fearing to terrify the little fluffy thing. It was learning to fly. I thought of my own first flight across the silken banners—held by the nervous boys as I rode around the ring—and watched the little tyro on the branch with the kindly protecting sympathy of the finished professional. Presently it gathered sufficient courage for a new effort, spread its awkward wings, and attained a neighboring stretch of grass where its mother hopped, twittering instructions.

I returned to Mary Hamilton and, skipping many verses, sang:

"Yestreen the Queen had four Maries,  
The nicht she'll hae but three;  
There was Mary Beaton, Mary Seaton;  
And Mary Carmichael, and me."

The song suddenly took possession of me, swayed me. I sang Mary Hamilton's appeal to the mariners as though it were my very own. There was heart-break in the inflections of my clear soprano.

"O a' ye mariners, far and near,  
That sail ayont the faem,  
O dinna let my father and mither ken,  
But what I am coming hame."

The world seemed very silent when, with the cessation of my song, I swung back into every-day life. Then the heavy shadow under the pines suddenly took shape, detached itself, and I forgot Mary

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Hamilton in my interest in the tall, powerfully built man, who came quickly toward me across the grass. The stranger carried his hat in his hand, and his thick brown hair was roughened by the wind as he strode along. That he knew me, and was very glad to see me, was evident, for in his eyes there was an expression of unmistakable delight, and from beneath his heavy brown mustache his white teeth gleamed in a pleased smile of recognition. Although I was sure that I had seen him before, I could not remember when or where. I blushed with mortification as I realized that I could not call this old acquaintance by name. To make up for my forgetfulness I stepped forward to meet him, holding out my hand and smiling a welcome:

"How do you do?" I said graciously, trusting to hide by this cordiality my lack of memory. "Did you leave your boat below? Aunt Caro will be so glad to see you."

Dropping his hat the stranger took my outstretched hand in both his own, but all he said was: "Hope!"

I had a sudden unaccountable desire to draw my hand away, accompanied by an odd sensation of dread, as I met his steady gaze—his gray eyes had a greenish glint. The next moment I could only wonder at this foolish feeling, which vanished as quickly as it had come. Then I remembered my gay circus toilet, and turned to get my cloak. The stranger, divining my wishes, gathered up the silken mantle and hung it over my shoulders.

"So you don't remember me!" he said, and his deep, rather harsh voice had an intonation of regret. "It was foolish of me to expect it—you were only a baby then."

I blushed again; this time at being found out.

"I am so sorry to have forgotten," I said. "Won't you please tell me your name?"

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For answer he drew a flat leathern case from his breast pocket and took from it a miniature which he handed to me. It was the picture of a child; a child with hair like rings of gold and large blue eyes. The little creature's eyebrows were dark and delicately arched; the saucy little nose had an upward tilt; the rosy lips had gay, upward-curving corners. A very sunshiny little face, indeed. The frame of the miniature was of gold, and the design an odd one. It was as if the child had parted tall shafts of golden-rod and looked out at you from between their yellow fronds. Under a bit of glass let into the back of the frame was a tiny sprig of withered golden-rod.

I gazed wonderingly at the miniature, and at the withered flower. Then lifted my eyes to the stranger's face. "Pluto!" I said.

There came from the near distance the sound of bitter-voiced denunciation. Katie was advancing, making known her woes.

"An' beneath his coat it were all the time, an' he sayin', 'I'm sure I spied it somewheres, Katie.' An' leadin' me from room to room an' I niver shuspectin' nothing—a lam' in his hands! Of all the limbs of Satan, thin, Master Willie's the worst, an' well named Wild. An' 'twas only whin I was wellnigh dishtraced wi' keepin' you waitin' that I spied the bit whup stickin' out fra' beneath his ridin' jacket, an' thin only because o' the glint o' the sappheer in the handle o' it, an'——"

In her angry haste she failed to see that I was not alone until, red-faced and breathless, she stood close beside me. But if I had forgotten the stranger, Katie's recognition was instantaneous, and he remembered her. Disregarding her frosty stare of discomfited bewilderment, and the rigid determination shown in face and figure to ignore past acquaintance-ship, he stepped quickly forward and shook her un-

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willing hand. Then, while making civil inquiries as to her well-being since their past meeting, he took the miniature that I still held and slipped it back into his pocket. He did this with such swift dexterity that Katie, in her embarrassment, noticed nothing. Indeed her one and only effort seemed to be not to look at him.

Because of the picture I, too, was ill at ease. I felt that the man had taken a very great liberty in painting it, and in carrying it about with him. Yet as he appeared to be quite unconscious of having broken an unwritten law, I was at a loss how to express my displeasure. I was but fourteen. My small world was made up of county neighbors, who lived all the year round upon their own estates. I did not understand—or know how to meet—those who had not always been acquainted with the Yorkes and Carmichaels. I was given no opportunity, however, to recover my self-poise or to decide upon what I ought to do and say.

"Mrs. Carmichael, sir," said poor Katie, rushing into embarrassed speech, "will doubtless, thin, be pleased to see you if you'll but walk till the house. Miss Carmichael, sir, wud be wishful to accompany you, but she is expectit elsewhere. An' being but her maid, an' she needin' an attendint, you'll doubtless excuse me——"

"It would give me great pleasure to call upon Mrs. Carmichael," was the civil response, "but unfortunately I am pressed for time."

He looked at me for a long moment as if wishing to add a new picture to his memory, then, bidding us good-bye, walked rapidly back to the little forest of pines and vanished within its glooms of shade.

"Wid God's help," said Katie solemnly, "I avoided his compellin' eye! Did he say aught of the half saxeence, my bairn?"

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"No," I said briefly.

I had no wish to be questioned. My mind was in a turmoil in regard to the miniature. Did I confide in Aunt Caro she would laugh, and talk of conquest. If I told the boys they would vow vengeance. As for Max—where might not his anger lead him should he learn of the stranger's stolen possession! For stolen it was, since even the picture of one's child face should be one's own to give or withhold. But surely I might tell Katie. Her great unselfish love made her a safe confidante and a wise counsellor. And it was not fair, I decided, to keep from her what would interest her so very much. I laid my hand upon her arm, staying our rapid progress toward the tent, and told my story.

"Aweel, aweel!" she exclaimed, but not loudly; and then, closing her lips tightly and staring at me (without seeing me), she fell into deep thought.

I stood waiting beside her, twisting my whip this way and that—Max had given it to me—admiring the play of light across the sapphire sunken in its handle. I did not trouble further about what to do in the matter; Katie was thinking for me, that was sufficient. Presently my oracle spoke—but to herself, not to me.

"An' a painter jantleman, most likely, an' could ha' sold the bit picture (he bein' thin wi'out money an' needing it sore), for many wud ha' been glad an' proud to have bought sae winsome a face. But no, not him! For he's gentle born, as all may see, and no' just a common artist, like. No, he keepit the bit bonnie face for his ain silf an' it's luck it's been afther bringin' him. He lookit grand, dressit in the best! I canna blame him greatly though, belike, I ought. 'Tis but the wee winsome face o' a bit bairnie, when a's said an' done! An', mayhap, he had lost a young shister, an' my lam' put him in mind o' her, and he made the bit picture an' put it forninst his

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lonely heart. No, no"—addressing me at last—"we'll keep our ain counsel, Miss Hope. I'd not be afther mentionin' the picture—best not tell every-thing! Let us not grudge the sad at heart a ray o' our own sunshine. (Whin"—again communing with herself—"it's but a weak-like reflection of that same, afther all; an', I'll be bound, not half sae bonnie as the child hersel' at the time.") She turned severely upon me. "You were a beauty *thin*, Miss Hope—but that's years ago. Ah, mony's the time I said to you as pritty is that pritty does!"

"Yes," I assented, as we moved on together, "and you must be glad to be able to stop, you poor Katie. It's a pity that I should not be as good looking as all the Carmichaels," I continued, swayed by a mischievous desire to rouse my dear companion. "They are a handsome race."

"An' it's han'some, is it?" was the sarcastic rejoinder. "But maybe, *thin*, you're afther admirin' crows! An' I wonder at you, Miss Hope. You, wi' all the beauty o' the Yorkes, to be talkin' of the black Carmichaels! And finding fault wid your ain mither's looks! The hair like sunshine, the big blue eyes, an' skin like the snaw-drift touched wi' the color o' the wild rose. To say naething of the grace o' figure—light as the wind-tossed flower. Ah, she could dance, could your mither! An' you, the very image o' her, findin' fault wid your appearance; I'm ashamed for you, *thin*, Miss Hope. The black Carmichaels, indeed!"

By two o'clock the land-breeze had died away, and when, at four, I again walked with Katie to the tent, a wind from the sea was moaning through the pines. We could hear the roar of the breakers sweeping in upon the bar at the river's mouth. I was glad of this change in the atmosphere, since the cool



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sea-breeze would enable us to do our best. The heat in the tent that morning had been oppressive.

Our audience was a very small one—Aunt Caro, Mr. Errol, and Katie. Their high stand was on the side opposite our greenroom; they liked to see us ride in. The brass band had its place near the main entrance. The musicians were all old men, and had been engaged for the summer. Each man was sworn to secrecy in regard to our circus mania. We had no wish to have Moaning Pines invaded by the populace of the neighboring villages. As it was, the gay music, with the heavy boom of the big drum that always accompanied a *tour de force*, brought many a keen-eared boy too near the tent. The grooms often had their hands full driving off the overcurious.

To please Mr. Errol old circus customs were held to, but we always introduced some nonsense of our own devising. The performance that afternoon commenced, as usual, by the entrance of our small troupe, riding two by two with dignified solemnity around the ring. Then my beautiful chestnut mare, dear Lady Disdain, showed her paces. We believed that her waltzing and other feats of skill could not be surpassed by the best-trained professional. Later (arrayed in my star-bespangled frock with its floating garland of morning-glories), I sprang from her back over the broad blue banners stretched across the ring. Then the boys held hoops, covered with blue, pink, and white paper, through which I burst to the accompaniment of a mighty clash of cymbals and the boom of the big drum. Dear Lady Disdain was always in constant fear lest I might fail to return to her in safety, after each of these flights aloft. Her ears were never quiet and betrayed the strain she endured. Yet she was ever eager to enter the ring, and showed as great pride in my triumphs as I felt in hers.

Sergius Boris Best, on the contrary, detested the

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entire performance. He spent the time on guard outside the tent, whence an occasional howl of melancholy protest came to remind us of his near neighborhood and unalterable disapproval. But sometimes he had to enter and lend his services. This was when we played Lord Ronald and Lady Clare, and Mr. Errol had chosen to demand the little pantomime for that afternoon.

"It was the time when lilies blow,  
And clouds are highest up in air,  
Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe  
To give his cousin, Lady Clare."

Poor Serge had to be the doe. He disliked his part very much. He would have refused to play it, I believed, had he known what meek animal he personated.

Jamie, clad in one of Katie's lilac calicoes and wearing a cap, was Alice the nurse. Lord Ronald had won his title by taking this rôle when a very small boy. Max read the poem while we enacted it.

The great wolf-hound played his part well. Years of practice had taught him the exact moment when, as the lily-white doe, he must leap up and, dropping his head in my hand, follow me

"— — — all the way."

He was graceful, gentle, always to be depended upon. I loved him very dearly. So dearly, indeed, that when Max, according to his wont, the play being over, stepped forward to take the "single rose" from my hair, I denied it him, fastening the flower instead to the collar of my pet. Mr. Errol applauded, while the dog, holding his head haughtily, supremely conscious of my favor, stalked proudly from the tent. Aunt Caro laughed, well amused to see Max look grave.

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"Are you even jealous of Old Serge?" she questioned, in her rich contralto.

"Yes," said Max steadily. "Why did you slight me, Hope?"

I smiled and blushed. I thought him foolish, but his folly pleased me.

"Give him this, Lady Clare," cried Mr. Errol, flinging another rose over the railing of his high stand. "You mustn't snub poor Max, child, when he's just come home."

Teasing Ronald sprang forward to catch it. Alice the nurse, suspecting mischief, flung herself upon his lordship, tripped upon the unaccustomed skirt, and went down bearing him with her. The rose was crushed. I laughed out with delight, made my reverence quickly, and escaped to my dressing tent. Then, as always, I was sorry to have pained Max, and determined to behave better in future. Later I rode around the ring with him—both standing, my hand upon his shoulder—while he guided our two bare-backed steeds, Gray Griffith and Lady Disdain. Max rode superbly, managing the horses so skilfully that I flitted from one to the other and back again without difficulty or danger. When at the last we rode up to the grandstand to receive Mr. Errol's compliments, and the pretty bouquet prepared for me, I made amends for past ill behavior.

"Max is the best rider of us all," I announced positively, nodding gayly at Mr. Errol. "See, I salute him, and bow the head!"

So saying I kissed my finger tips, and swaying lightly toward my companion gently patted his cheek. But Max, to my surprise and embarrassment, caught my hand and pressed his lips to the place my own had touched.

"Bravo, bravo!" roared Mr. Errol, with such stentorian approval that the horses, alarmed, started

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away in great haste and carried us out of the main tent.

"Are you angry?" Max asked softly, as he lifted me to the ground. He did not release me but, bending his handsome head, strove to look into my eyes. "Are you very angry, dear little Hope?"

Here a frightful and blood-curdling in-drawing of the breath through closely shut teeth made us both start. I shrieked faintly, for close behind us stood an Indian with uplifted knife.

"Will Carmichael!" exclaimed Max in disgust, recognizing the painted savage. "What an infernal nuisance you are!"

"Come, hurry up and change your togs, Hope, my infant," said the Indian, wagging his be-feathered head at me and grinning hideously, "or I'll scalp you where you stand. I want to finish up this nonsense and get a swim before dinner."

"No swim for you this afternoon, William," said Max. "Don't you hear the breakers on the bar? There must have been a storm offshore. There's a very heavy sea on."

We listened as with one accord. Above the drawling tones of Sam's voice, as he amused Mr. Errol by propounding old conundrums and giving new answers, could be heard the angry roar of the surf on the sand spit at the mouth of the river. The breeze, rushing inland laden with foam breath, grew wilder each moment. The tent awnings flapped; we heard the snap, snap, of the big red flag as it whipped gayly overhead. A pleasant invigorating freshness made itself felt everywhere.

"When is a door not a door?" demanded Sam lazily in the near distance.

"When it is a-jar, my cool young friend," came Mr. Errol's prompt answer.

"Wrong again, sir"—Sam's voice was heavy with

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compassion. "A door is not a door when it is a-creek."

"Rubbish!" from Mr. Errol. "You'd better try again, Sammy."

"I will"—Sam spoke gently—"for I love to please. When is a door like dear Lady Disdain?"

"Give it up," cried Mr. Errol.

"When it's bolted."

"Hope, Hope," implored Will, "do hurry up!"

I ran away to my dressing tent and changed my tulle and spangles for the simple attire of a stage country girl—a frock of blue and white striped cambric, with sun-bonnet to match, and a white apron. The entertainment was to end with a new pantomime composed by Jamie. It was entitled:

"A man's a man for a' that,  
In Quaker's gray or cleric's hat."

As I entered, mounted upon my beautiful mare, I looked about the large tent with happy eyes. I was excited. Max had shown so much affection. I was never quite sure that I might always please him—and I wished to, very much. I dropped the reins on Lady Disdain's glossy neck and she walked quietly once around the ring. The tent was pleasant; the sunshine shut out, the fresh breeze stealing in.

"This fair young creature," read Max from Jamie's manuscript, "is Doris Day, daughter of a wealthy ranchman. She is out for a ride upon the prairie; she seeketh flowers."

I leaned from my saddle, scanning the grass of the prairie earnestly. I was so busy looking for flowers that I failed to observe a handsome youth in clerical garb (Jamie), who rode up and joined me. He had hardly done so when Sam, dressed as a Quaker in the old-style costume—flapping gray coat and broad-brimmed beaver—came up on the other side. Doris

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Day now proved herself a gay coquette, distributing her smiles equally between her two suitors. Her sun bonnet was pushed back; she stuck a Quaker nosegay in her belt, a clerical posy in her hair. Then, growing saucy, she presented each aspirant with a flower from his rival's bouquet. Both men showing undue temper, she dismissed them and rode away. They retired from the ring.

"The lovely damsel loseth her way," Max announced. "Night is coming on. She feels alarmed."

Dear Lady Disdain now strayed from the ring. As we passed the entrance flap I caught a glimpse of Sergius sitting bolt upright just outside. His head was stretched forward, his ears cocked—I wondered what he was watching so intently. Then I turned my attention to counterfeiting the anxiety my trying position demanded. An ear-piercing screech now came from the greenroom, and Will, with Ronald—also in paint and feathers—rushed in. They bestrode bronchos, and looked far too wild and savage for the nerves of my excitable mare.

I was to have been captured by the red men and, later, rescued by my two suitors; the one forgetting his cloth, the other his habit of turning the cheek, in their determination to free me. Will and Ronald were to have been slain by these men of peace, but Lady Disdain ordered otherwise. No sooner did she see the oncoming savages than—as the boys said—she went wild, starting off on a mad race around the ring as if for very life. At first I strove to soothe and stop her, but Wild Will, thus gaining vantage, came very near and stretched out a sinewy arm to snatch me from my saddle. His dark eyes gleamed with excitement. To make his appearance more terrible he had painted spots, to represent blood, upon his arms and chest. At this moment a cloud partially obscured the sun. The sudden gloom, and the wicked

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look that the paint and strange dress gave my cousin's dark face (transforming its cheerful features into the aspect of a red devil), filled me with an unreasoning terror. I screamed in real fear, and giving the mare her head urged her toward the grandstand.

Delighted, and not at all comprehending the state of my nerves, the savages gave chase and headed me off. Sam the Cool, an onlooker, awaiting his cue in the entrance to our greenroom, understood better, and rode in, followed by Jamie, hoping to mend matters. They only made things worse, however, since they pursued the Indians who were pursuing me, and the race grew dangerous. Max could not ply his whip because the horses were already nearly crazy with excitement, neither could he catch the bridle of my mare without risk, since those following might then run me down before they could stop their mad pace. He stormed and commanded in vain; no one heeded. Mr. Errol, adding his voice to the general clamor, pounded upon the railing of the stand, entreating, expostulating, scolding. Katie sat back in her chair, her apron over her head. Aunt Caro, a red spot on either smooth cheek, applauded; and the band, thinking this the time for much noise, clashed out a wild hunting chorus. The air was filled with the dust of tan bark, uprising from flying hoofs.

Crouching low in my saddle, or swaying first far to one side, then as far to the other, in my efforts to evade Wild Will, my foremost pursuer, as he made desperate efforts to seize me, I circled the ring like a hunted creature on the now frantic mare. Suddenly a streak of sunshine flashed across my face and, an instant later, a fierce sound cut through the uproar like a knife—the war-cry of the old wolf-hound. It startled me back into my senses. I realized that we were but playing. The dog was in deadly earnest.

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My foolish fears were forgotten in my anxiety as to what might be taking place outside. Why had the sunlight dazzled me? The tent had no opening on that side. Something must be done, and at once.

I ceased my endeavor to escape my wild cousin, and as he leaned toward me, his eyes glittering, his cheeks ablaze under their war-paint, I flung myself into his outstretched arms. Surprised, he clasped me close, half his fierceness already quelled by the necessity of managing the frightened pony—unaccustomed to the double burden.

I threw my arms about Will's neck, I put my lips close to his cheek. "I'm tired, Willie," I cried. "I give up."

He shouted his triumph to those who followed; laughing gayly, half in exultation over the victory, half in amusement at the lengths to which his imagination had carried him. The band stopped playing the hunting chorus and struck up the march to the strains of which the horses were accustomed to make the grand entrance. This quieted them better than voice or rein. Lady Disdain trotted snorting into the side tent, where the grooms easily handled her. My captor would have carried me to the grandstand, there to receive congratulations upon his prowess, but I quickly told him of my fear that Serge was in trouble. This fear was added to by seeing that the servants, who had been deputed to keep guard outside had, attracted by the uproar, come into the tent. Max hastened out, and the boys, dismounting, followed. Mr. Errol, calling me to him, began to scold me gently for yielding to such childish panic; while Katie, pretending to approve this chiding, tenderly smoothed my disarranged hair. I submitted to both reproof and caresses, listening intently to what was going on outside. Where was my dog?

There came a loud exclamation, followed by a



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silence that was unnatural. I broke away from my nurse and ran swiftly to the side of the tent whence the sound of the boys' voices had come. As I approached I saw that there was a long slit in the canvas, and realized that it must have been through this that the sunshine had flashed. I parted it and looked out. Stretched upon the grass but a short distance from me lay the old wolf-hound. I knew that he was dead.

My cry of anguish brought Max quickly to me. The boys, with eager kindness, ranged themselves between me and my darling, striving to hide the cruel truth. I paid no heed to Max or to them. Weeping bitterly I made my way to my faithful old companion, and gently lifted his beautiful head upon my lap. The rose that I had fastened to his collar had been broken from its stem in the death struggle, but its pale pink petals were unhurt. It lay, fresh and fragrant, beside him on the grass.

It was supposed that the overcurious intruder, who had cut the canvas that he might see our wild race, had been caught in the act by the dog. Furious, the old hound must have sprung upon the eaves-dropper, who, seizing him by the throat, had killed him with one sledge-hammer blow of the fist. Because of the strength necessary to make such an act possible, suspicion fell upon the blacksmith of the neighborhood and his assistant. But they were able to prove an alibi, and the murderer of Sergius Boris Best could not be found. That he had used his fist, and not a knife, was the only comfort Max and the boys had to offer me. The dog, they said, had died painlessly.

We buried my old playmate under the moaning pines, in a spot where he had loved to stretch himself on hot summer noons.

"Grieve nae mair for poor Serge, my lam'," said my warm-hearted nurse, her pleasant voice not so steady

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as usual, "for you'll meet him again, one time. (His murderer walks accurst—his doom will fall.) For it's I that believe that the grand old hound, wha died doin' his duty bravely, wull be granted to stand at heaven's gate to welcome his little Hope Carmichael—when she's called till her mansion there!"

### III

It was early June, and the morning of my betrothal day. For I was seventeen, and it had been thought best that Max and I should be formally engaged—if I were willing. In a few months my eighteenth birthday would arrive when—according to the plans made years before—we were to be married. Max made no secret of his wishes, although, because it was in the bond, he had never told me outright that he loved me. But if all the members of our household knew how Max felt, no one, not even Katie, could be sure of my ultimatum. I had thought it only fair that Max should chose for himself, and not be tied down by old arrangements made when we were children. And, in order to give him a sense of complete freedom, I had pretended to care no more for him than for my wild cousins. At first pride had suggested this rôle, then the love of justice, and lastly, when it became evident that Max had eyes for me alone, I fear a wayward spirit prompted my manner of affectionate indifference. Although I loved him very dearly, and secretly thought that no one might compare with him, I enjoyed the admiration I received from others; amusing myself, in childish fashion, to the top of my bent. Aunt Caro, disapproving, in her gentle way, of the early marriage arranged for me, managed so that I might have a little gayety by allowing me, so soon as I was sixteen, to go to the few balls and parties given in our neighborhood. Mr. Errol scolded, and Max remonstrated, in vain. Aunt Caro amiably insisted that I must have early what all my friends would get later, a

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season of girlish pleasure. And for once she had Katie on her side.

"An' it's glad I am, Mrs. Carmichael, to see you batin' the divil around the bush!" said my once nurse. "'Twould be a shame, thin, I'm thinkin', did our Miss Hope settle down marrit and a' wi'out a few hearts achin' o'er the pain o' it. Sure 't will do Mr. Max nae harm to fight for her favor—as did mony a gran' young jantleman for her mither's, when she were the beautiful Mary Yorke. An' I'm no sayin' but what you yoursel', Mrs. Carmichael"—Katie spoke with good-natured condescension—"may ha' had ane or twa wearin' the willow for the sake o' your dark een. For some do, I know, prefer a black eye to a blue. (God, maybe, undershtandin' why, He choosin' to mak' baith kinds!)"

Poor Katie! It was a trial to her that I had so small a world to conquer. It was only in summer and during the winter holidays that any entertainments were given. The conquests made by my blue eyes were not so many as my doting nurse boasted, although sufficient in number to make Max uneasy. I later regretted my waywardness. But I was a wilful, overpetted child.

Mr. Errol, with Max, and my two guardians—precise legal gentlemen—had arrived at Moaning Pines the evening before. The betrothal was to be very formal. I rather dreaded the solemn ceremony, but not so much as I feared what must precede it—Max's informal declaration. Nervous excitement over this kept me awake half the night. I could not understand why. It seemed absurd that what I had looked forward to all my life, my real engagement to Max, should so affect me. That he was excited was natural enough and, so I thought, quite as it should be. I could see that Aunt Caro and Katie enjoyed his doubt and anxiety, while themselves too uncertain

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of what my decision might be for entire ease of mind.

At first, being quite unaccustomed to lying awake, I found pleasure in the strange sounds and silences of the late night. The perfect quiet, broken now and again by the fitful sighing of the pines and the far-off moan of the breakers on the bar; and at times, as the hours slipped past, the eerie cry of some uneasy night bird jarring through the soft, melancholy cadences of murmuring sea and whispering firs. But as the night wore on the loss of sleep began to tell upon my unwontedly excited nerves. Old tales of weird happenings, stories of ghosts, hobgoblins, and werewolves, followed each other in quick succession—like moving figures in a magic lantern—across my tired brain. When toward dawn I fell into a heavy slumber, it was nightmare ridden.

I thought that I was in the life-boat once named for me, the *Hope*, that had drifted ashore to tell of shipwreck when I was a tiny child. A thick fog hung heavy upon boat and billows—great oily-looking sea swells, over which the *Hope* slipped helplessly, whither I did not know.

I was not alone. In the prow there crouched a young girl, richly but oddly clad. For she wore a quaintly fashioned gown of blood-red satin, and around her graceful throat a high, stiff ruff. In her beautiful eyes there was a look of great anguish and the terror that a child might show were it about to be done to death. As I stared at the lovely white face, showing ghostlike in the murky light, I felt so great a pity that I forgot my own peril. As I would have asked her who she was, she began to sing:

"I'll no put on the dowie black,  
Nor yet the dowie brown,  
But I'll put on the robes o' red  
To sheen thro' Edinbruch town."

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Then I knew that I was looking at Mary Hamilton.

She continued singing, but she changed the words of the verse that she sang, and I grew faint with dread:

“Yestreen the Queen had four Maries;  
The nicht she’ll hae but *two*;  
There was Mary Beaton, Mary Seaton;  
And *there was me—and you.*”

And then, in spite of myself, I was obliged to join in—to sing with her:

“O a’ ye mariners, far and near;  
That sail ayont the faem,  
O dinna let *our kinsfolk* ken  
But what *we* are coming hame.”

I dreamed that, rebelling against this fate, I seized the ponderous oars—unseen till then—and thrusting them through the rowlocks began to urge the boat landward, guided by the low muttering of the surges on the beach. It was with exultation that I found I could row with ease. The heavy craft sped over the oily billows like an arrow, and soon I saw lights upon the distant stretch of sand toward which we were hastening. These were great bonfires shooting up snaky tongues of flame. Dark shapes flitted about, feeding the fires. I thought that the boys, my cousins, were waiting there for us—that we should soon be safe. But Mary Hamilton, lifting her white arms in warning, cried out that these were wreckers, and the friendly blaze but a lure.

I thought that I made a desperate effort to turn the boat, and failed. The next instant I was telling my beautiful companion not to fear, since, safe beneath the dark water, my fair young mother lay sleeping. We would go to her, and be at rest. But Mary Hamilton looked at me strangely, pityingly.

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"I am dead," she whispered; "*my* weird is dree'd."

A great horror came upon me, a loud roaring filled my ears. The boat was among the breakers, surrounded by the wreckers. "Mother!" I cried, "O mother!" and awoke.

Katie was bending over me, her kind face full of anxiety.

"There, there, my heart's bairn," she said soothingly, "dinna greet! Sure the ugly dream's gone now. An' look what I found forninst the treshold o' your door!" She laid a great sheaf of the beautiful purple iris on my pillow. "And this bit paper tied till it. Open it, thin, an' read."

I blushed as I recognized the handwriting, and, to please my dear nurse, read the verse I found written there, aloud:

"O flower de luce, bloom on; and let the river  
Linger to kiss thy feet!  
O flower of song, bloom on, and make forever  
The world more fair and sweet."

"Flower o' song!" said Katie, looking at me fondly, "an' it's right well he's named ye. Yis, Flower o' song—and our ain bonnie bird! 'Fore God, an' it's thankful all should be that you'll bide at hame, in the home nest, instead o' marryin' some stranger lad wha would be afther carryin' away our Hope. See, thin, what Mr. Errol himsel' sends ye for the cereemony of betrothal—he brought it wi' him last night."

She opened a box that lay on a chair near the door, and taking from it a mass of lace, shook it out. I sat up in bed, my eyes wide with admiration.

"Yis," announced Katie proudly, "woven specially for Miss Mary Carmichael, wi' a pattern o' her ain flowers rinnin' here an' there an' everywhires t'rough-out. Mornin'-glories!—a many of thim. But 'tis

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like a spider's web, or the work o' the frost on our winder panes! Fair lovely—an' no mistake! To be worn over a slip of white satin, or blue, if your fancy pleases." She held up the wonderful flower-woven gossamer and gazed meditatively at it, her lips pursed up. "Belike," she continued, musingly, "belike Mr. Errol—wha is a wily though gran'-hearted jantleman—just said to himself that it wud do nae harm to mak' sure o' your answer till Mr. Max by prisintin' you wi' this. A gown that the Fairy Queen hersel' might be fine and proud to wear. A kind o' lure, I'm thinkin', till our Flower o' song! For mark my words, my bairn, the men be iver the same. Yis, rich or poor, gentle or simple, good or evil, they strive iver to gain their way wi' us poor women i' the same fashion—wi' gifts and flattery, flattery an' gifts! You'll mind, thin, the Serpent an' poor witless Eve? 'Twas him gave her thim apples. (In his ain fashion—wi' specious words o' guile; not havin' arms nor hands he couldna just break 'em offen the Tree.) Mr. Errol kens weel a Yorke wouldna tak' a gift falsely. Sure he knows that an' you accept it, it means 'yis.' But there's ane thing he doesna ken and that I, God forgi'e me, was near hand forgetting, and that is that the Yorkes—ride straight."

Katie lifted her head proudly and, looking me in the eyes, said steadily: "I ken now what I might ha' knowed lang syne, if I hadna been an old foolish body. If ye hadna been for sayin' 'yis,' Mr. Max would ha' been let to know it before this day. An' he up by four the morn, Tummas says, saddlin' his ain horse an' ridin' the country o'er for hours!" A delighted smile, which she strove in vain to repress, irradiated her strong face. "I'm thinkin' he's no so easy as to what the day'll bring forth! Aweel, aweel, it does a young man no harm to be a bit



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anxious an' downhearted. I'd no be in too great a hurry, my lam', to mak him o'er proud o' himsel'. But wha am I, thin, to be givin' counsel to the daughter of Miss Mary Yorke! Born Carmichael you are, Miss Hope, and I'm no gainsayin' it; but fra' the crown o' your golden head to the soles o' your bonnie feet ye are just a Yorke. Wi' a knowledge o' hearts and horses in your blood that taches you how to win the ane an' manage the ither! And now you'd best get up or you'll be late till your breakfast—an' that wud niver do wid Mr. Errol and the twa strange jantlemen here——"

Wild Will, dominated as always by a spirit of mischief, saw to it that Max had no interview with me that morning. He was by my side constantly, showing an unswerving devotion that amused Mr. Errol and delighted Aunt Caro. Prompted by their wild brother, Ronald and Jamie followed suit, overwhelming me with their audacious laughter-provoking attentions. But Max, careless as ever of on-lookers, put an end to their nonsense after luncheon when he asked me—before them all—to spend the afternoon with him. We were assembled upon the veranda. The silence that fell upon the gay little company told me that my answer would mean everything to them. Mr. Errol, Aunt Caro, the two lawyers, and my four cousins watched me with breathless interest, forgetting their manners in their eagerness to hear my reply.

I felt the hot color sweep across my face from brow to chin, my heart beat to suffocation. Unconsciously, I rose to my feet. Then, true to the traditions of the Yorkes—rode straight. Although I could not, somehow, raise my voice much above a whisper, I am sure my answer was distinctly heard. Max, stepping quickly forward, took my face between his strong hands, and, after gazing deep into my eyes

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as if to make sure that my heart had spoken, kissed me on the lips.

"I thank God that it is yes," he said simply.

That was our real betrothal. But in the evening, to please dear Mr. Errol, we went through with the formal ceremony, just as it had been planned for us years before. I wore the beautiful lace frock over its slip of white satin. About my throat Aunt Caro clasped my mother's string of pearls; the boys gave me a morning-glory fashioned of sapphires for my hair; and Max placed a splendid sapphire, set in diamonds, upon my finger—my betrothal ring.

We were a gay little party enough when, all formality ended, I was called upon to sing. Each asked for his or her favorite ballad; my guardians—grown as light-hearted as we—called for many.

"And now, Hope, my little daughter," said Mr. Errol, smiling upon me fondly as he emphasized my new title, "sing 'Angels, ever bright and fair,' and then we old folks will have had our share of your evening."

I sang Handel's soul-lifting melody; sang it gravely, with a solemn ecstasy thrilling through the words, through the swinging cadences. But this was because, born a singer, I unconsciously lent myself to the interpretation of the thoughts, the feeling, the inspiration of the composer. In reality I was so very happy that I did not in the least realize what I was singing. I was a trifle awestruck when I thought how different all might have been had either Max or I chanced to care for some one else. I looked with deep affection at the family group surrounding me. What a fortunate girl I was, I thought, and sang:

"Angels ever bright and fair,  
Take, oh, take me, to your care."

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Max and I lingered long on the veranda. It was nearly twelve when I stole softly into my room. Katie, tired out by the day's excitement, had fallen asleep on the lounge where she had sat down to wait for me. I did not wake her, but set about preparing for the night without her help. I unclasped my pearls, took the morning-glory from my hair, and, first pressing my lips to the sapphire—September's jewel—that gleamed upon my hand, slipped it off. There was no light save moonlight in the room. I put my trinkets down softly upon the dressing-table, then moving quietly to the window, leaned far out.

The moon hung low in the west; in a half hour she would be gone. No wind was stirring and the pines, their tops softened into velvet by the moonlight, were unwontedly silent. It was as if they were listening to the soft voice of the sea, that in the deep silence of the night made itself heard, calling, calling.—And presently this call was answered both by tide and river, that together, as by one impulse, turned, hastening to obey.

A desire to see their waters flowing swiftly seaward, shimmering under the moon's rays, took possession of me. Accustomed to following my impulses, and thinking it could do no harm were I to yield to this one—although never before had I been out alone at so late an hour—I crept noiselessly from the room, stole downstairs, and opening one of the drawing-room windows, went out into the night. As I left the veranda and crossed the short lawn between the house and the little wood of pines, I looked back. The upper windows were gayly lighted; there was plenty of time to run to the river's edge and back before the house was dark. I felt quite safe; the river was but a stone's throw away. But I shivered a little as I entered the black shadow of the trees. I had forgotten to bring a wrap and my gown was open at the throat.

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I lifted the train from my arm, where I had thrown it to keep it from the dewy grass, and drew it over my shoulders; then hastened along the path, slippery with pine needles and hardly discernible under the gloom of the thick branches. How fragrant the cool air was, sweet with the wholesome odor of the pines and the crisp salt tang of the sea!

The spot toward which I was hastening was where a little dock had been constructed, just two planks upon rough supports, leading out into the water. Here a heavy dory was always kept, used only by the workmen on their errands to the town below. I walked out upon the dock, wishing that its few boards were longer. If only I might look down upon the rushing river, darting now like a silver arrow seaward. The dory had not been pulled close beside the small pier; only its bow was drawn in and rested against the planking, the body and stern projected into the stream. I thought that I might allow myself the pleasure of stepping in and, seated far aft, be almost in the space of hurrying moonlit water. Near enough to enjoy its charm, while out of reach of its strong, dangerous currents. To suppose that a boat, simply because it was a boat, would bring me into danger, was but foolish superstition. Foolish, yet sweet, since it meant that my kinsfolk loved me very dearly. But I was alone, no one to see and worry over me, I would just step into the clumsy tub for a moment. Then I paused, unwilling to do what might mean disloyalty.

I was turning away when I saw something gleaming in the water, just beyond the dory. Something that floated—now seen in a stray moonbeam, now but a dark patch upon the ripples. I forgot everything save my desire to see the flowers or water-weeds that lay cradled so near. I sprang quickly into the boat, and making my way to the stern, looked over.

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To my surprise I found the object was fastened to the boat by a rope of braided rushes. I recognized Jamie's handiwork, and, wondering what he had tethered so carefully, undid the knotted end and pulled in my prize. As I drew it along the surface of the water I saw that it was a wreath, woven of ferns and the purple flower-de-luce. A sudden rush of tears blinded me, for I knew Jamie intended it for the grave of Sergius Boris—Best.

I strove to find my handkerchief, and in my careless haste turned too quickly; the chain of rushes slipped from my hand, and wreath and slender rope fell back into the stream. Conscience stricken, I leaned far over the stern trying to regain Jamie's treasure. I made a desperate effort to grasp the wreath, succeeded, drew back aglow with delight. I would refasten the chain—then hurry home. With dripping fingers I tied a clumsy knot and rose to leave the boat.

But it was no longer beside its little pier, under the shadow of the moaning pines. Who had last used it had forgotten to fasten it securely, and my effort to reclaim the flowers had set it free. Already there was a space of black water between its prow and the landing-place. As, realizing the need for instant action, I hastened forward, preparing to spring ashore, the swift tide caught the clumsy craft, swung it sharply around, and in another instant it was in mid-stream, borne along like a feather toward the narrow passage beneath the old chain bridge, whence came the roar of the torrent as it rushed seaward.

The quick turn of the dory as the swirl of the mad current seized it would have thrown me down, perhaps overboard, had it not been for my circus training. Although because of this I kept my poise for the moment, I dared not trust to my feet, but hastily crouching down made ready for the coming rush

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beneath the bridge. The low moon illuminated but faintly the miniature rapids. Did the boat pass these in safety it might drift ashore below, where the stream in broadening gained placidity. Above the bridge, as it tore along, it seemed like a wilful wild creature, and the noise of its hemmed-in waters a snarl of threatening protest. On one side a giant boulder lifted to the bridge its slippery shoulder, as support—a mimic precipice. On the other, rocky ledges fretted the hurrying water into froth. I braced myself for the jar of sudden shipwreck—and was swept beneath.

The dory passed so close to the boulder that a fern, which had found foothold in some unseen crevice, drew its graceful leaves—wet with spray—caressingly across my cheek. My ears were deafened by the sound of the brawling water. The chill was intense. Then the boat was out again in the waning moonlight, and I sighed with relief, thinking the worst danger past.

There were no oars in the boat. These were always kept concealed under low-growing bushes near the little dock. For a few moments after passing under the bridge I was at ease about myself, but anxiety for those at home began to harry me. If Katie woke to find me gone she would be almost crazed with terror. And the boys—and Max? As these thoughts began to crowd my mind, and imagination painted vivid pictures of what might even now be taking place at Moaning Pines, I scanned the shores with eager eyes to see if the boat were approaching either side of the river. But as the stream grew quieter the land receded, and soon lengths of gleaming water separated the northern from the southern shore. The dory, swung this way or that as the current willed, was now and again turned completely around. But whether it floated stern forward or bow on, it

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kept in mid-stream and drifted steadily eastward toward the ever-calling sea.

Presently houses began to show dark against the sky to the south. The boat would soon be opposite the old seaport town. The sight of these distant irregular outlines, silhouetted against the horizon, brought me to a sudden, to a dreadful realization of my helplessness. I had been so sure that the dory would float ashore on the sedgy meadows. My chief fear had been of the walk back, alone; my greatest anxiety, for the terror of those at home. Now——

I drew in my breath carefully, following the instructions of my singing teacher as never before, then with all my strength called for help. Again, and yet again, I cried out, flinging my voice far. Then I sat silent—listening. And from the warehouses on the river's edge—warehouses neglected, long disused, since the commerce of the old town was dead—the echo of my appeal was flung back to me, musical, mocking. There followed the deep silence of the night, broken only by the lapping of the water against the drifting boat and the voice of the sea from the bar.

Although accustomed all my life to facing danger, to the taking of risks in the ring and when riding cross-country with my reckless cousins, I had never been in such peril before alone. And while a runaway horse had never daunted me, a runaway boat was something I did not understand. I felt completely helpless—ignorant, desolate. Once more I lifted my voice in long-sustained cries for help, and again the echo only returned from the sleeping town. Then I heard, far to the northward, an answering cry. But even while my heart was throbbing with the joy of reawakened hope, I knew that the shrill sound came from the brazen throat of a locomotive. Another instant and the night express, the

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windows of its cars alight, swept across the long railroad bridge beneath which I had but just drifted, and rushed on through the town.

I struggled to regain courage, telling myself that Max and the boys would soon come. I scanned the broad river with such intensity that my vision blurred. At last I did not know what I saw or what I did not see, imagination playing strange tricks with my tired eyes. I called for aid unwearingly, persistently, until great sobs choked me dumb. The moon had set, only the stars remained. I was far past the town. I could not see the long sand bar that stretched almost across the river's mouth, but each moment I heard more clearly the rhythmical beat of the waves as they broke upon its farther shore.

The channel between the end of this sand spit and the northern bank was very narrow, and close by the low yellow dunes a ramshackle summer hotel had been built. As I neared this I made a desperate effort, overcame my sobbing, and cried out once more. My voice sounded unnatural, so weak, so forlorn. No answer came. If the boat would but approach either bank I might, I thought, jump ashore. I stood up on the seat, poising myself lightly as when riding, and prepared to spring. But the dory, like some dull live creature, kept obstinately in the middle of the short channel. The long swell of the ocean caught it, slid it outward.

I sank down lower, lower. Flinging my arms across the seat I pillowed my weary head upon them and fell to crying hopelessly, like a frightened child, for Katie—for Max.

The far-off rote of the surges on the shore roused me. I was already a long distance from the land. I sat up and looked about me. The stars had grown dim. I could see but a short distance; the black



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water and the horizon line merged. My pretty frock was wet to the touch, my bare throat like ice. I drew the pins from my hair, and although it, too, was damp, its soft warmth as it fell about my shoulders brought comfort. In a very short time the darkness increased, the stars disappeared, and all the world was blotted out from me by a heavy fog.

I had been certain of being seen and rescued directly daylight came, so many fishing smacks haunted the coast, besides the chance steamers and trading vessels. But their presence now added to my peril. By and by I heard the hoarse note of fog-horns uttering their cries of warning. They sounded now far away, again so near that I called out in answer. Once or twice I was sure that I had been heard. There came the sound of voices, men's voices, of talking close at hand. I listened intently, miserably, feverishly, till at last I was convinced that my own wild heart throbs, and the slap, slap of the waves as the dory slid heavily over them, were the only sounds to be heard.

My eyes ached with staring into the blackness, colored lights danced before them. My throat was dry, parched, I had cried out for help so long. My head was on fire, yet I shivered with the cold. Strange fancies began to take possession of my tired brain. I thought of Mary Hamilton—was she, even now, seated in the prow? How had my mother felt, I wondered, as she sank beneath the dark water? Had her last thought been of me, her baby? I commenced the prayer for those who go down to the sea in ships, the prayer that—because of my mother's fate—I had been taught to say morning and evening since I could first lisp the words.

"O eternal God," I whispered piteously, "who alone spreadest out the heavens, and rulest the raging of the sea——"

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I became silent. Sobs choked me. Katie, my Katie, was even now praying thus for me. But presently I was able to repeat devoutly that appeal intended for those in immediate peril, beginning: "O most powerful and glorious Lord God, at whose command the winds blow, and lift up the waves of the sea and who stillest the rage thereof——"

So the night wore on. No sleep came to bring even a moment's forgetfulness. But before the dawn appeared, turning the impenetrable black veil of fog into a luminous gray shadow, I had fallen into a half stupor. From this I was roused at sunrise by a chill breeze from the east that rent the vapor, driving long mist wreaths before it and disclosing stretches of pale blue water. I sat up, staring dully, and saw close above me, almost upon me, the slippery side of a vessel. I strove to rise; my brain reeled and I could not. I moistened my parched throat and cried out; my voice sounded hoarse and low. But, as if in answer, two men leaned over the gunwale and looked down. They seemed to fear me, for they drew back, muttering to each other and making the sign of the cross. The dory was slipping, slipping past——

I held out my arms imploringly. "Help, oh, help!" I wailed.

The men were now joined by another, a tall man, with rough brown hair and keen gray eyes. I recognized him, and crying "Pluto!" rose to my feet, only to fall forward unconscious.

## IV

The dory struck against the larger vessel as I fell, and I was severely bruised. Of this, however, I knew nothing for some hours, as the chill of the long night, the exposure to the fog, and the intense nervous excitement brought on fever. I fancied always that I was in danger of shipwreck—either drifting upon lonely, rock-bound islets, or rolling ashore—swung high on gigantic surges—toward stretches of sandy beaches where wreckers lighted their beacons of destruction. Mary Hamilton was my constant companion, her warning cry coming ever just too late to save. And the nightmare ended only to recreate itself—a phoenix of fresh horror rising from the ashes of the old.

When I regained consciousness I thought that I was still in the dory, and I dared not open my eyes. I felt weak and faint. My head and side ached; I was as if steeped in dull, sickening pain. Then I became aware that I was in a bed, and clad in a garment of coarse cotton. But the swinging motion and the plash, plash of water against a boat's side convinced me that I was yet adrift. Then I heard some one moving near me. I held my breath, listening intently. Was it Mary Hamilton in her blood-red satin? Silence again, broken in another moment by a subdued cough. A rush of joy sent the blood surging through my veins. Was Katie with me? Was I safe at last? I opened my eyes.

I was in the lower berth of a small cabin. The upper berth and the curtains had been taken away. The little room was simply fitted up and scrupu-

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lously clean. The glass of the port-hole was open, its curtain drawn, making a dull green twilight, pleasant to weary eyes. Upon a small lounge sat a woman, darning a coarse woollen sock. She was short, and squarely built; her flat face swarthy, her black hair shiny and very straight. I saw that she was part Indian, a half-breed, and I remembered the men who had looked at me over the side of the vessel before I fell. I realized where I was, and wondered how long I had been lying there. I spoke.

"Are you taking me home?" I asked, and I tried to sit up. But pain and the swinging motion made me giddy. I sank back.

The woman did not answer. She stared at me stolidly for a moment, then left the cabin. Disappointment brought the big tears. I closed my eyes tightly, forcing them back. I must be brave. But the tears were so tiresome, coming thick and fast. And I had no handkerchief! I felt childishly aggrieved at this lack. Katie always tucked one under my pillow. As, because of this fancied neglect, sobs began to rise, my want was supplied. A handkerchief, fragrant with cologne, was placed in my hand, and I felt a firm touch upon my wrist. I dried my eyes hastily. The man whom I called Pluto was beside me and was feeling my pulse. I was very glad to see him. He seemed an old friend. I looked up gratefully.

"You are taking me home?" I said.

He smiled kindly, and strove to soften his harsh voice as he answered in the affirmative. "Yes, dear child," he said.

"And I do not know your name," I murmured. My voice was strangely weak; it annoyed me.

"My name is Rollis Lannion," he said.

"Aunt Caro—and——"

"I have telegraphed her," he interrupted. "I sent

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a man ashore at once to get word to her of your safety. And now you are not to worry, but just lie still and dream of pleasant things—of birds and flowers.” He smiled again, and I caught myself wishing that his teeth were not so big and white. “Your fever is gone,” he continued, “and I have some nice broth for you. See, here it is!”

The woman entered, carrying a tray on which was a bowl of blue china filled with the steaming liquid. Mr. Lannion took a napkin from the tray and himself spread it carefully over me; then he fed me, spoonful by spoonful. The broth was very nice, of chicken, with rice in it. I could take but little, and he looked grave over my inability to swallow easily. I made a great effort to hide my lack of appetite, since it seemed to distress him.

“Just one spoonful more,” he urged coaxingly, when I at last refused. (He held the spoon close to my lips, as though he would persuade a capitious child.) “Just one little sip—it is so good. I had it put in this pretty bowl for you—with its blue pagodas and quaint figures.”

“No,” I said, pushing it away gently, “no. It is nice, and you are kind—but I am so tired. When is Aunt Caro coming? And—and Katie?”

The woman had remained in the adjoining cabin—the main cabin—while her master cared for me. She now re-entered and carried the tray away. Mr. Lannion taking my hands in his, began to stroke them gently. There was something very soothing in his firm touch; something rhythmical in the slow even movement. His hands were large and powerful, long-jointed, the knuckles developed, the finger tips square. Because of my own athletic training, I noted his splendid physical condition. He was sinewy, vigorous, superbly muscular—not a spare inch of flesh on him, as the boys would have said.

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As he continued to stroke my hands and wrists I grew oddly dreamy. His gray eyes looked steadily into mine, but this did not embarrass me. No, I stared reflectively up at him, as he bent over me, wondering at the greenish glint in those strangely narrowing pupils. Were they narrowing—or did I only imagine—ah!

I started violently. A thought stung me back into the consciousness I was so rapidly losing.

"Jamie's wreath?" I questioned eagerly. "Lost?"

"Yes," was the brief answer.

"I am so sorry," I wailed, "so sorry, so very sorry." Again my tears began to flow.

Mr. Lannion dried my eyes gently. He looked distressed. He called to the woman, speaking in a language that I did not understand—the patois of the French-Canadians. She brought a bottle of cologne and with this he bathed my forehead, while he tried to comfort me.

"You shall have as many wreaths of flowers as you wish," he said, "only you must not fret, but try to sleep, and grow well and strong. Loison shall sing to you—an Indian lullaby."

He spoke to the half-breed, and she commenced to chant strange unfamiliar words in a plaintive minor key. Mr. Lannion again stroked my hands and wrists firmly, steadily, keeping his gray-green eyes fixed upon mine. Soon the chanting seemed to come from a great distance; the strange eyes looked upon me from out of a mist. I slept.

The fever did not return, and as I was a healthy young creature—sound, wind and limb—before two days had passed I felt quite myself again. I was not allowed to leave my berth, however, and Mr. Lannion persisted in treating me as though I were still ill. As I was shy about questioning him in regard to my return home, not liking to be a wear-

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some as well as an unlooked-for passenger, I said nothing of my homesickness until the evening of the fourth day. Then my patience gave way.

Mr. Lannion had come to pay me his usual evening visit. He had seated himself upon the little sofa near the open port-hole and looked through it as he talked to me. The sea was in gentle humor. Gay little waves rippled across its moonlit surface. The vessel moved quietly, the breeze being only strong enough to fill its sails.

"There is just enough wind to-night," said my companion. "You will be gently rocked to sleep. I fear you would never make a good sailor, even if you spent a year afloat."

"Why am I still here?" I asked impetuously. "It seems to me we are a long time in arriving at Moaning Pines."

"I am taking you to Boston," was the quiet answer. "We shall be there very soon."

"Why—" I began, and then stopped. If my kind host had been on his way to Boston when he picked me up, I ought not to expect him to retrace his journey. Yet surely we had had more than sufficient time to reach Boston.

"This boat does not belong to me," Mr. Lannion went on when I failed to continue speaking; "it has only been lent me by a friend. He is to take possession when we get to New York; he is making the journey from Canada by train. He expects to cross the ocean in her; she is perfectly sea-worthy."

"Aunt Caro and—and the others" (I did not like to mention Max) "will meet me in Boston?" I inquired eagerly. "But you telegraphed them to do so, of course!"

"Of course," was the brief answer.

"Shall we arrive in a few hours?" I asked. "I

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am afraid that they must be very anxious. Haven't we been a long time on the way?" I spoke nervously. I began to feel strangely ill at ease.

Mr. Lannion rose, and coming to my side laid his hand upon my forehead. "If you begin to fret," he said reprovingly, "your fever will return. Try to wait patiently; there's a dear little girl."

"I don't wish to be disagreeable when you have been so kind," I said apologetically. "Forgive me, please. Of course I will wait." I wished to cry, the tears were uncomfortably near.

Mr. Lannion brought a camp-chair and placing it beside my berth sat down. Then he would have taken my hands in his, but I drew them away. I had no desire to be treated like a sick child and soothed to sleep.

"I thank you for your visit," I said, "but I think I will say good-night."

He smiled tolerantly. "You poor little thing," he said gently, "your nerves are on edge from dullness. I wish you understood Loison's patois. If you did you might amuse yourself talking to her—not that she is very amusing. Should you like to go on deck for an hour? Loison shall roll you in blankets and I will carry you up."

"Yes," I said eagerly, "but I prefer to dress first. Ask her to bring me my things, please."

"I am so very sorry," said Mr. Lannion. "I really hardly know how to tell you what has happened. It is so annoying, yet so ridiculously unbelievable! The truth is these people are idiotically superstitious—they thought bad luck attached to your pretty clothes. Loison made them up into a bundle, weighted it, and threw it overboard."

I laughed, then remembered that my lace frock had been Mr. Errol's gift, and became grave. Mr. Lannion watched me keenly. He looked anxious.



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"It does not matter," I said hastily, unwilling to distress my rescuer by letting him see my regret.

"I shall have plenty of new things here for you by to-morrow night," said Mr. Lannion.

I stared at him in surprise. "You are very kind"—I spoke a trifle stiffly—"but my aunt and my maid will have thought of all that; they will bring what is necessary." Then, thinking I had perhaps appeared ungrateful, I added: "They will realize my need of a travelling dress, Mr. Lannion, but I thank you for your thoughtfulness all the same."

He went to the port-hole and stood looking out.

"What about going on deck?" he asked. "Will you try it?"

I thought he felt hurt, and not wishing to be ungracious, I accepted his suggestion. "I should like it very much," I said. "I suppose we shall see the lights of Boston soon. Are we entering the harbor? Is that the reason there is so little motion?"

He did not speak for a moment; then he said, as if he had not heard my questions: "On second thoughts, I think you had better not make the effort to-night. You are still weak."

There came a sharp knock at the door and he was called away, and again I began to wonder over the length of time spent in making so short a trip. It was unaccountable; so unaccountable that I grew alarmed as I pondered. It was not like Katie to submit to being parted from her bairn so long. And easily as Aunt Caro took most things, she must be disturbed by my present situation. The more I thought, the more bewildered I became. I longed to question Loison who had returned and was now seated by the open port-hole, but she understood only enough English to take my orders. Should I send for Mr. Lannion and ask him to tell me plainly why we had been so long on the way?

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My feelings toward Mr. Lannion puzzled me. When he was present I believed in him. Something about him—his splendid physique, perhaps—gave me confidence. I had been guarded and cared for all my life and he took charge of me in the way to which I had ever been accustomed. Now that I had commenced to analyze my feelings—a task quite new to me—I could not account for the sensation of distrust that assailed me in his absence. This had been previously so vague that it had passed unnoticed. I strove to push it away as ungrateful; it but returned with renewed strength. A hundred ways in which Max and Katie might have got to me rushed into my mind. In a few moments my imagination had conjured up and overcome every obstacle that could have arisen to keep them. At last I was sure that something was being hidden from me—some awful tidings of disaster.

"I want Mr. Lannion," I said imperiously. "Please tell him to come quickly."

Loison rose and looked at me stolidly, but she did not leave the cabin. I repeated my order, speaking very slowly. I thought that she did not understand. She came to the berth and arranged my covering gently. There was an odd look of pity in her usually expressionless eyes. Moved by a sudden impulse—by gratitude for her faithful care—I patted her swarthy cheek, smiling up at her.

"Good Loison!" I said softly, "you have been so kind. I hope to give you something pretty when my aunt comes for me. Do you understand me, Loison? You are to choose what you will have." I repeated my words in French, taking great pains to speak clearly. "Do you understand how much I wish to thank you, Loison?" She nodded. "And now call Mr. Lannion, please."

She eyed me strangely for a moment; she looked at

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the door, then back at me. She opened her lips, as if about to speak, then closing them firmly, left the cabin. Presently Mr. Lannion entered.

"What can I do for you?" he inquired.

I wondered why he never called me by my name. I asked him. "Have you forgotten my name, Mr. Lannion?" I spoke irritably.

"A foolish little question from a very weary little girl," was the good-tempered answer. "But you are over-excited. I will bring something to put you to sleep."

"I wish to remain awake," I said, with childish imperiousness. "I want to be ready for Aunt Caro and—and Max" (I colored hotly) "when they arrive."

"Plenty of time for a nap first," said Mr. Lannion composedly. "You will want to feel strong and bright to go ashore."

He left the room, returning in a few moments with what he said was a sleeping draught. I was already ashamed of my distrust. He was so good-natured, so friendly, so kind. Yet I hated to drink the mixture he held persuasively to my lips. What if I slept too long? I pushed the glass away.

"No, no," I insisted, "I don't wish to sleep heavily. I must not keep them waiting."

The gray eyes looked steadily into mine, and I suddenly wished to please, to be obedient.

"That is a good child," he said approvingly, as I meekly swallowed the stuff. "And you may sleep peacefully, for there is no man living who would not be willing to wait—for you."

This pretty speech amused me and made me feel at ease. Such foolish, affectionate admiration was the atmosphere to which I was accustomed. I smiled.

"You treat me like a child," I said. "First the bitter medicine and then the sugar! But you have

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been good to me, and my people all will thank you. Good-night."

I awoke at sunrise. The curtain of the port-hole was drawn, but I knew that the day was fine, for the reflection of the sunlit water danced upon the ceiling. Loison was sound asleep on the lounge. I lay still, fearing I might wake her should I rise and peep out. Then to my dismay I noticed that the schooner was still under way; it rushed along briskly, with steady keel. I watched Loison with nervous eagerness, wishing that she would wake. Surely in another moment the sails would be furled and the anchor dropped! I strained my ears, listening breathlessly whenever the soft pad, pad, of a sailor's quiet footfall sounded overhead. But I heard only the customary noises, the creaking of the cordage, the flapping of the sails, the occasional hoarse commands of the captain, and the ripple of the water along the sides.

All my doubts of the past evening swept back, and, forgetting the sleeping Loison, I slipped from my berth, ran to the port-hole, drew aside the curtain and looked out. It was a very beautiful morning. Too beautiful, since so clear a sunrise betokened clouds before night. The water was ruffled by a breeze from the east, and the vessel ran before it gayly. By afternoon, I thought, the sky would be gray, and the breeze might develop into a gale. To the south I saw land—then Loison's hand was upon my shoulder, and she drew me away in grave, though silent, disapproval.

"Boston, Loison?" I asked, pointing landward, as she led me back to my berth.

But she shook her head and, readjusting the curtain, gave me to understand that I was not to get up again. I did not disobey. My mind was in a whirl. If we were not approaching Boston, then where were

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we? Not at sea, surely; that, the motion of the vessel betrayed. Directly I had had my breakfast I sent for Mr. Lannion to ask this question. He told Loison that he would be with me at once. I waited and waited, listening for his coming with ever-increasing discomfort and impatience. But the moments grew into hours, the boat still sped onward, impelled by the fast freshening breeze, and it was not until eleven o'clock that he tapped at my door. He made no apology for his tardy answer to my summons.

"You must have an early luncheon," he said, after bidding me good-morning. "Loison tells me that you woke before dawn. And you must try to sleep all the afternoon, so that you may feel strong and well when we land to-night."

"To-night!" I exclaimed in relief. "Oh, I am so glad. And at what time, Mr. Lannion?"

"Quite late," he said. He drew up a chair and sat down. "I have a confession to make," he continued, "and I hope that you won't be displeased. I have full warrant for what I am doing from"—he looked away for an instant, hesitating—"from the highest authority."

"Aunt Caro and—and Mr. Errol?" I asked, meaning Max.

"We were in Boston harbor the night that you had fever," he said, not answering my question directly, "and it was thought best not to move you. I could not wait, so I was permitted to keep you with me. The little voyage has done you good."

"I do not understand," I said, bewildered. "Did they come on board?"

"No, they were not in Boston. Everything was arranged by telegrams."

"By telegrams!" I exclaimed. "But where are they to meet me, then?"

"They are lending you to me for a little while,"

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said Mr. Lannion. He looked at me very steadily as he spoke. "I am taking you home with me. I hope that you may not object to going."

I was silent. I was weak, and disappointment brought the tears to my eyes. Of what was Aunt Caro thinking, to allow me to visit the home of this stranger? And it did not seem possible that Max would consent to this separation. We were but just engaged.

Mr. Lannion watched me closely. "It is a visit of charity," he said, his harsh voice tuned to a low key. "There is a young girl living with me who is bedridden—my cousin's wife. She is but twenty-three, yet she may never hope to run about again. It is thought that she cannot last the year out. I hope that you will not grudge her a little of your sunshine. To have you with her will brighten, cheer her more than I can say."

I swallowed hard to keep back the lump that had, somehow, risen to choke me. Of course if I could do anything for a poor suffering girl—still—yet——

"Katie?" I questioned in faltering tones.

"Your maid?" said Mr. Lannion hastily. "Yes, you will have your maid." He did not notice my distress, apparently. "Here is Loison with your broth. Shall I feed you? No? You prefer not? Very well; but I shall remain until you have drunk every drop."

The disappointment, though great, had not robbed me of my appetite, and the thought that I should see Katie—and of course Max—that very night gave me comfort and steadied me. Indeed I was so hungry that I took all the broth. Mr. Lannion's rather grim face softened as he watched me.

"I have been but a dull companion, I fear," he said, and he sighed. "Men of thirty-seven must seem

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tiresomely old and dull to a young creature like you."

"I don't care about age," I said. "And I have not found you dull."

"You are just the same friendly child that you were when Fate first tossed you into my arms, a little less than ten years ago," he said thoughtfully. "You have changed very little—to me."

"I am grown up now," I said, smiling tolerantly, as young people are apt to smile upon the reminiscences of their elders. "I shall be eighteen in September." Then I blushed as I added, speaking sedately, with the dignity that I thought the subject demanded: "My engagement to Mr. Errol is just announced. We are to be married in September."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Lannion with polite indifference.

It was the first time he had appeared unsympathetic. I felt suddenly very young, and as if my engagement and approaching marriage were matters of little importance. "That is Long Island," he went on, pointing toward the blue stretch of land on the horizon.

"Your home is on Long Island?" I inquired.

"No," he said; "but it is not very far from the Sound—six or seven miles, at most." He rose, and stood looking down at me very kindly. "You have been very sweet and patient"—his old protecting manner had returned—"I will try to make you happy at Ornith Farm."

"The name of your place?" I asked, my confidence and friendly feeling restored.

"Yes, because of the many birds there," he said. "Your voice will make them all jealous, and I hope you may sing to me often—and to my poor sick Aileen."

"I will do my best," I said, and he went away.

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I was happy. I had suddenly realized that Max could at once find his way to Ornith Farm. And I promised myself to do all that I could to cheer the suffering invalid. I might in this way make some small return for Mr. Lannion's kindness.

Presently I wondered at the drowsy feeling that was creeping over me—I had felt very wide awake but a moment before—my head was heavy with sleep—very heavy——



## V

I slept long, not waking until night had come. The vessel was darting forward like an arrow. The water hissed against the sides as we rushed along. A gray twilight filled the little cabin. The glass of the port-hole was closed, to keep out the keen east wind that followed so sharply, but the curtain was pushed aside. Loison was not with me. I felt as dull and heavy as when I had fallen asleep, quite unrefreshed by my long nap. I lay still, staring dully into vacancy, my mind torpid. An hour or more slipped by before my customary alertness began to return, and when Loison entered I did not speak, as usual. By and by I became aware that the odd gray light was caused by the moon, shining dimly through a veil of clouds. Then I realized the lateness of the hour, and a rush of delightful excitement roused me.

"Loison," I cried, sitting up in my berth, "Loison, we must be nearly there!" Then I sank back, unaccountably sick and giddy.

The woman came quickly to my side and bathed my temples with ice-cold water. This refreshed me, and I thanked her gratefully. "Kind Loison!" I said.

Presently she brought me a cup of black coffee, which she made me drink. I did not wish it, feeling a distaste for anything of the kind. Her real anxiety, however, made me swallow the strong stuff rather than distress her. She arranged my pillows with affectionate solicitude, and, seating herself beside my berth, began to chant her strange lullaby. I sang the

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pathetic melody with her, weaving through it trills and swinging cadences as they floated into my mind. But soon I was dreamily chanting the old ballad of Mary Hamilton, setting its tragic words to the plaintive minor of Loison's slumber song. We sang softly, very softly, Loison and I, our united voices blending with the song outside, the shrill whistle of the pursuing wind, the sharp hiss of the water as the vessel's prow cut through it, and the insistent creak of the timbers peevishly urging the sails to do their best.

I sang the ballad through—those verses of it that Katie had taught me—then Loison, continuing her chant, recommenced. After a time the vessel's mad race slackened, soon we slipped along very quietly.

“Rise up, rise up, Mary Hamilton,”

I sang, and as I sang I listened to the sounds without:

“Rise up, and dress ye fine,  
For you maun gang to Edinbruch  
And stand——”

I broke off abruptly and sat up.

“Loison,” I cried, “we are stopping! We must be close to land!”

The usually impassive half-breed started, and even in the murky light I could see that it was in alarm. She leaned forward, and taking both my hands in hers, murmured what sounded like a prayer. I scarcely heeded, so absorbed was I in listening for the dropping of the anchor, the lowering of the sails. This happened soon, and was done quietly; so quietly, indeed, that I wondered at the men's skill and silence. I had fancied that sailors always sang or were noisy when at work.

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Loison went to the port-hole and looked out. There came a gentle knock at the door, and Mr. Lannion entered.

"All in the dark!" he exclaimed. "You will need a light now. You are to dress and go ashore. Do you feel rested?" He leaned over me, taking my hand as if to feel my pulse.

"Yes, yes," I said quickly, "and quite, quite well, Mr. Lannion. Has Katie come? Did she bring my things?"

"No, she is not here," he said soothingly. "And I am sorry, but you will have to manage with what I have had brought for you."

As he spoke Loison drew the curtain and made a light, and I saw that a large box had been placed upon the lounge. Although disappointed at Katie's non-appearance, and by being obliged to wear clothes not my own, I was in no mood for asking questions. My one desire was for haste. Mr. Lannion apparently shared this feeling, for he left me immediately, saying that we were to land directly I was ready.

Though Loison could speak but little English, I had fallen into the habit of talking to her, content that she had the air of being an attentive listener. I chatted away volubly while she helped me dress; and I needed a good deal of help, since not only was I weak, but the new clothing required attention—a pin here, a few stitches there. It fitted me ill and had been oddly chosen. The undergarments were of common material, over-trimmed with machine-made embroidery and imitation lace. The serge yachting suit was of an aggressive glaring blue; both jacket and skirt were lined with purplish-crimson silk; while the stars and anchors, lavishly embroidered upon the pale blue blouse, were of a bright yellow-red.

Naturally, I said nothing derogatory in regard to Mr. Lannion's provision for my comfort, but Loison's

[illegible]

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watching me in a most singular manner. "I wish that you would tell me what I ought to give, Mr. Lannion," I persisted. "Five dollars, ten—how much? She has not only been a good nurse, she has been kind as well. I like her. How much should I give?"

"How much?" he echoed. "As much as you please, of course. Don't fret about what you ought to give, but do as you like."

He drew a quantity of money from his pockets as he spoke, both bills and silver, and, sorting it, made several piles upon the table. I marvelled at the swift dexterity of his large hands and their neat precision of movement, as I stared up at him disappointed, frowning. I was accustomed to having advice showered upon me. I had never before asked for it in vain. An over-petted child, I showed my vexation plainly. I stamped my foot with impatience.

"I think you are unkind, unfriendly!" I exclaimed pettishly. "I ask for help, and you give me—nothing."

"Nothing?" He pointed at the little heaps of money and raised his eyebrows, smiling quizzically. "I call that a great deal, and it is yours."

"Yes, yes," I said, still more impatiently; "of course my aunt will wish me to borrow all I need, but——"

I broke off, forgetting, in this necessity for deciding alone, the perfectly useless person beside me. I would give five dollars. Would Loison prefer to have it in bills or in silver? I would not consult Mr. Lannion again. As an adviser he was not to be relied upon. I selected a two-dollar and a one-dollar bill, two fifty and four twenty-five cent pieces.

My riddle solved, my conscience accused me of rudeness; so I smiled as I said, glancing toward the money still left on the table:

"Tom Tidler's ground! I have picked up my

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handful of gold and silver, thank you. I have taken five dollars."

"Ah, none for yourself!" was his comment. "Perhaps you had better put a little silver into your own pocket—I know that it is empty." And he surveyed my ugly, unbecoming suit with complacency.

"No, thanks," I said quickly; "Katie will have brought me some. Do you think we shall find her at Ornith Farm to-night?" (I could not believe that she had arrived, yet had failed to meet me at this landing-place.) "Yes?" as he smiled reassuringly, while he swept the money back into his pockets—not altogether unwillingly, I thought. "Let us be off at once! I will run and say good-bye to poor Loison."

My excitement was intense. I was so happy at the prospect of seeing Max and my Katie—within a short hour probably—that I was aggravated at the lack of lightness in my limbs. They ought to have shared my uplifted feeling. And Loison, whom I found waiting for my return, looked as dull and heavy as my body felt. I pressed the money into her hand, then, yielding to one of my sudden impulses, gently kissed her on each cheek.

"You have been so good to me!" I murmured. "I wish you every happiness, dear Loison."

She looked at me strangely. Were there tears in her bright dark eyes? They were not so hard as usual. She wrapped the silver that I had given her in the two bills, twisting them tight. She opened the port-hole and holding the little parcel in her open palm, spat upon it, then dropped it into the waters of the Sound. I stared in open-eyed wonder, but before I could voice my surprise, she took a small bottle from her bosom and motioned to me to remove my yachting cap. I obeyed, swayed by the fierce excitement that possessed her. She moistened her finger in the water that the bottle contained and made the sign of the

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cross upon my brow and breast. And I knew that it was holy water, and that the poor creature was striving to guard me from some dreaded evil. I laid my hand upon her shoulder.

"Loison," I whispered, "why do you do this? Why do you fear for me?"

She replaced the bottle in her breast and pointed toward the door: "*Loup-garou*," she murmured in smothered tones, and she began a prayer.

"Are you never coming, child?" cried Mr. Lannion, tapping imperiously, and he entered. He had a cloak over his arm, and wore an overcoat and a rough cap. He wrapped the cloak around me. "Pull your cap on firmly," he said. "I shall carry you; you are not fit to walk." He lifted me in his arms as he spoke.

"One moment!" I cried; "I must speak to Loison. I do not wish to be carried."

I strove to regain my footing; I held out my hands to Loison. Mr. Lannion paid no heed, but laughing good-humoredly, bore me swiftly through the cabin and up the stairs. I looked back, waving a farewell to the faithful half-breed. I was sorry for her, and bewildered by her fears.

"Good-bye, Loison!" I cried. "*Adieu! Que le bon Dieu te protège.*"

But she had fallen upon her knees and, her face buried in her hands, was absorbed in prayer.

## VI

The rush of the east wind as it swept across the deck was a delight, bringing refreshment and a delicious sense of freedom, after my confinement in the narrow cabin. I smiled in kindly tolerance over Loison's superstitious dread of Mr. Lannion, while my gratitude for his care—so soon now to be relinquished—increased. I accepted this care, however, with a childishness quite unpardonable in a girl of seventeen. My only objection to being carried came from a fear of giving too much trouble. When I spoke of this, and Mr. Lannion said that my weight was as nothing, and the slight service a pleasure, I took it all as a matter of course.

"This is one of the few occasions when I don't regret my lack of inches," I said, as, still holding me carefully, he descended the steps, fastened to the side of the vessel since our anchorage, to the boat lying in readiness below.

"Yours is a perfect height," he said absently, while he settled me comfortably in the stern and took the steering ropes. He evidently could think of but one thing—getting ashore quickly.

The night was eerie, uncanny. The moon's face was hidden behind so smooth, so impenetrable a veil of clouds that no peep-hole remained through which it might look down—in friendly fashion—upon the earth. While there was sufficient light to render all objects visible, they were distorted by the murky gloom. The trees and low bushes that grew upon the hilly point, toward which the two sailors were rowing us, assumed strange shapes; then, as we drew



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nearer, looked as if they might be the lurking-places of unpleasant things. On one side, where the point joined the shore, was a dance pavilion. Its heavy shutters were closed, the many doors boarded up, showing that the season of summer gayety was not yet begun. Meant for pleasure, its barricaded condition gave it a forlorn, deserted look. We did not land at its dock. Our boat was run ashore below the steep bank of the point. Hardly were Mr. Lannion and I on land before the men were off again, making their swift, almost silent, way back to the vessel. And—through the odd gray light—I saw that those on board were already preparing to resume their journey.

"The carriage must be waiting for us," said Mr. Lannion, again lifting me in his strong arms. "The road is very near," and he started up the bank.

"I don't see why I am so weak," I complained fretfully. "I have not been ill long, and I have slept so much."

"Drugs affect some people in that way," said Mr. Lannion. "You will soon regain your strength."

"Drugs?" I repeated questioningly. "Why, I have taken very little medicine, Mr. Lannion."

"To be sure," was the hasty answer; "you are quite right. No medicine to speak of. I did not think what I was saying. Let us rest a moment here" (we had gained the top of the little hill). "You can sit down—on this rock—if you wish."

I caught his arm. "Look!" I whispered. "There is something near that clump of trees."

As I spoke the dark object detached itself, proving to be a very tall man.

"What sharp eyes!" exclaimed Mr. Lannion, a note of relief in his voice. "That you, Jasper?" as the man approached. "All well at the farm?" The man did not speak but grunted an affirmative.

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"This is Solomon Jasper," said Mr. Lannion, not as in introduction, but simply announcing a fact. Solomon Jasper took off his hat and stood in an attitude of stolid, yet respectful, attention. "He is to be trusted." Mr. Lannion spoke slowly, impressively, as if wishing the apparently obtuse Solomon Jasper to be aware of the compliment paid him. "I trust him to look after my valuables." He stopped speaking, and glanced from the man standing rigid before us—a powerful, soldierly figure—to me, and back again.

"Mr. Lannion is very fortunate," I murmured, smiling. I did not know exactly what I ought to say under the circumstances. "Trustworthy people are rare, I am told."

Mr. Lannion leaned over me. "Jasper shall carry you now—if you prefer," he whispered.

I was about to say no (I had a dislike to being cared for by this strange-looking servant), when I remembered my manners, and, realizing that Mr. Lannion must himself be weary of the burden, consented to the change. My decision pleased Mr. Lannion. Solomon Jasper, picking me up as though I were a doll, accepted it stolidly, showing neither gratification nor distaste.

"Carefully, Jasper," warned Mr. Lannion as we started. "She has been ill—carry her smoothly."

Again Solomon Jasper grunted in response. I looked up with youthful curiosity into his dark face. I had thought him a negro, but I now saw from the shape of his features that he was half Indian. He was a handsome man, his expression gentle, almost benevolent. Yet it was manifest, even to my untrained perceptions, that I was to him but a package of which he must be especially careful—a breakable package, by which his master set great store. This seemed odd to me, accustomed all my

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life to being petted by the servants for my own sake.

Mr. Lannion kept close beside us. It was as if he had allowed his servant to carry me only to prove his trust in him. And that Solomon Jasper considered it both a privilege and a compliment was clear. He walked with much the same air of proud importance as does a dog intrusted with his master's newspaper.

The high-road ran below the hill but a short distance from where we had landed, and here we found a carriage, drawn by two powerful black horses. The coach was handsome, the horses thoroughbred, but the driver sat like a jockey, not as a coachman. The careless, easy slouch of his attitude, the way he held the reins, pleased me—a Yorke. I got into the carriage with the comfortable conviction that we should reach Ornith Farm soon, and safely. Mr. Lannion bidding me curl myself up on the back seat and try to sleep, placed himself opposite. Solomon Jasper mounted the box beside the driver, and off we sped through the night.

The carriage was of the best make; easy-running, luxuriously cushioned. The horses' gait was delightful—a long free stride. But I was painfully wide-awake. Instead of trying to sleep, I stared eagerly from the windows at the changing landscape, showing dimly through the uncanny gloom. Mr. Lannion watched me. His eyes seemed to catch what little light there was and hold it; the gray pupils gleamed strangely.

Presently we left the level road and began to mount a hill. The horses took it with a rush; the driver breathed them at the top. Then up another, and still again—hills.

"Is it a mountain?" I asked.

Mr. Lannion smiled. His teeth were as shining

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as his eyes. "Ornith Farm is at the very top," he said. "A broad plateau, not on the summit of a mountain, but merely the highest bit of this hilly country. You can see both the Sound and the Hudson River from there. The plateau is not very large, but the farm is sufficiently so—about three hundred acres. The fields belonging to it slope down to the west, and there is a good bit of woodland. East of the high-road—it runs on the verge of the plateau—the land is little cultivated. The man who owns it is a poor farmer. His house, over two miles distant, is the nearest dwelling to mine. I have no neighbors."

I listened with interest. Max might be able to board at this farm-house—Max, who was even now awaiting me. I moved restlessly from window to window. Mr. Lannion noticed my impatience.

"We are nearly home," he said.

The country, as we steadily surmounted hill after hill, had grown more and more open. Few trees were to be seen and no houses. The fields were rough with boulders. By and by the road ran beneath a high board fence. Close inside were many trees. Their tops appeared above it—a black serried mass. On the opposite side of the highway—to the east—a low stone wall allowed the open country to be plainly seen. It looked desolate enough; the gray light showing a succession of bare hills, rolling away into the shadowy distance like the billows that had so lately threatened to engulf me.

Presently the carriage stopped before a plain farm gate. Solomon Jasper got down and opened it, the impatient horses pawing the gravel in their desire to reach their stable. The driver soothed them with low-toned remonstrances. His voice was pleasant, gentle.

"Come, Sol, old man," he drawled, as Solomon slowly closed the gate behind us, "don't be too long,

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will you? I guess these horses don't want to linger much. And hear them puppies whinin' for their freedom! I calliate they're about wild by now."

The whining to which he alluded was the deep-chested baying of fully grown dogs.

"Puppies?" I ejaculated in surprise. "What does he mean, Mr. Lannion?"

"Great Danes," my host explained. "They run loose at night generally, but are chained now because of our coming. They are rather savage, so I keep them tied in the daytime. Cooper—the coachman—has charge of them. They hear us now."

"Are there many tramps about here?" I asked. It seemed curious that such lazy creatures should wish to climb the hills. "Do you need fierce dogs for protection, Mr. Lannion?"

"Yes," was the brief answer. "See, there are the lights of the house!"

I looked but failed to see the lights he mentioned. Instead I saw, on either side of the avenue, a row of tall elms. Between their stately trunks, to the southward, a stretch of lawns or meadows; to the north, a confused mass of low bushes and a thick line of hedge. In another moment we had stopped on a broad sweep of gravel before a large house. I had not time to do more than glance at the exterior, when Mr. Lannion lifted me from the carriage and carried me up the steps into the hall.

"We must be very quiet," he whispered, his lips almost touching my cheek, "and not wake poor Aileen."

The place was dimly lighted. We had entered under the stairway. The hall ran the length of the house, which was built in the simple old fashion, with two rooms on either side. At the other end was a glass door leading out upon a veranda—this I discovered later. The doors of the rooms—over-tall

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and made of shining dark wood—were closed. Above each was a small shield of the same shining wood, and upon each shield was carved a flight of birds. Over the glass door ran a scroll—or banner—of wood upon which was carved, in German text: “Welcome to Ornith Farm.”

But in spite of this cordial greeting the hall was gloomy, for while an old-fashioned design had been followed, the old-fashioned measurements had been disregarded. The ceiling was too high and the doors too tall; giving an air of compression, of narrowness to the whole. Yet it was really very wide. The shining tables and settles, ranged on either hand, were separated by a broad space of the heavily carpeted floor. (A carpet as soft as moss and as unobtrusive in its dark green tint.) Perched high above one of the tables, a great carved eagle stared vindictively at his own fierce image reflected in the black-framed mirror hanging opposite. The few pictures, engravings—all landscapes—had, like the mirror, dark frames, and but served to increase the dull effect of the gray painted walls.

I glanced about me with swift, eager scrutiny, looking for the dear familiar faces that I had so surely expected to find. But the sombre hall was empty. Mr. Lannion set me gently on my feet. He had possessed himself of one of my hands; he held it firmly.

“Katie,” I asked, “Katie—where is she, Mr. Lannion?”

His grasp upon my hand tightened; he put his arm around me, drawing me to him. Then, bending his tall head, he whispered gently, soothingly, as though speaking to a terrified child:

“She could not get here to-night; she is coming to-morrow, to-morrow morning. Hush,” as great tears of disappointment welled into my eyes, “hush,

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you must not cry!—no, no, you must go to bed, and to sleep. Then you will be able to welcome your old nurse cheerfully—when she arrives.” And he carried me up the staircase. “If you cry you may wake poor Aileen,” he said.

I covered my face with my hands, and bowing my head upon his shoulder, made a desperate effort to stifle the sobs of homesickness that threatened to rob me of my self-control. Mr. Lannion hastening his steps, established me presently in an easy-chair.

“Get her to bed quickly, Delcie,” he commanded in low tones. “I will bring something to quiet her nerves. She is worn out by the journey, poor little thing.”

“Yes, sir,” came the answer in a rich sweet voice; “the young lady shall be in nightly dishabill directly.”

Taught by the boys to consider tears an inexcusable weakness, and told by my nurse that Martha Washington never cried, I had always tried to endure my childish hurts—and woes—with stoicism. True to this early training, I hurriedly dried my eyes and smiled kindly at the comely maid—a young colored woman. Speak I could not. But she understood my wish to greet her civilly, and removing my flashy cap, said caressingly:

“What luxuriant golden-tressed curls! Let Delcievere brush them out soft and comfortingly. There, there,” as Mr. Lannion left the room, “don’t injure those sweet blue eyes with weeping! Delcievere will bathe them presently.”

She spoke quite without racial accent, but with the pleasant drawl and soft intonation peculiar to her people. Her odd choice of words and her quaint manner—she treated me as though I were a little girl—amused and diverted me. In watching her and

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examining my new surroundings, I found it not so hard to wait until the morrow for Max—and my Katie. I had Mr. Lannion's assurance as to their certain arrival in the morning. I smiled again at my good-looking attendant, as she began to brush my hair.

"This is a pleasant room," I said.

It was a hall bedroom of good size, with two windows opposite the door of entrance. The cottage furniture was pretty, the blue and gray carpet very thick and soft, and the frieze of the blue wall-paper extremely curious. This was a blue arabesque on a gray background that, when looked at quickly, resolved itself here and there into the number seven. Examined steadily, the graceful pattern held; the sevens disappeared, absorbed in the general grouping. I looked away, then glanced back so quickly that Delcie, startled, brushed my hair awry. The sevens had all started out again.

"Yes, I see that they are observable even to a stranger," was the maid's gentle comment. "The room is called 'seven up.' It's supposed by some to be a lucky number, but persons who, like me, studies Webster's unabridged, soon assimilates contempt for such fool thoughts. Yes," she continued, gratified by my interest, "yes, indeed, I do endeavor to promulgate my vocabulary. And, lawsy me"—with a sudden relapse into vulgar speech, and giggling mischievously—"Solomon and Zayma and little Nanny don't scarcely dare open their mouths when I'm 'round!" Recovering her dignity she added, speaking with pitying condescension, "But 'cepting Solomon (and he's half Injun), they're nothing but Southern niggers; and us Northern colored ought to have toleration for their ignorant ways, and set 'em an example of elegant talking. I wish there was more here to educate—but Mr. Lannion he won't



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have many domestics 'round. We work hard—we do get double pay, howsomenever!”

I suggested that in a small family, like Mr. Lannion's, few servants were needed. Delcie shook her head.

“Mr. Lannion's home,” she said, “is chock-full of invalidism and gentlemen friends staying all the year 'round. Dr. Despard,” she pointed toward the east wall of the room with her brush, “is in there afflicted with some incurable misery. Mr. Lannion occupies the other corner apartment,” motioning toward the opposite side, “where he's at this moment compounding a sleep mixture for—” She hesitated, her eyes met mine in the mirror before which I was sitting. Her expression was very strange—she looked frightened.

“Miss Carmichael,” I said, rounding out her sentence for her, and thinking that her sudden alarmed embarrassment was caused by not knowing my name.

She neither repeated nor used it, but placing the brush upon the dressing-table, she opened an armoire and then a chiffonnier, seeking what I needed for the night. Both receptacles seemed filled to overflowing with tawdry finery of the same style as that which I was wearing. Delcievere began again to talk.

“Yes, Dr. Despard occupies that corner room,” she said, speaking a trifle nervously, “and Mrs. Despard the two adjoining. Ornith Farm's almost a mansion. Three apartments to each side of this upper hall, yours making the seventh. I've never been to the third story. (Solomon—and, sometimes, Zayma—has it in charge.) Not that I care to; no, indeed! I've not the remotest interest in third-story-no-account part of dwellings.” And tossing her head with assumed indifference, she went to fetch the sleeping draught.

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The clocks throughout the house chimed the half-hour, half past one, as I laid my weary head upon my pillow. I felt very miserable; everything seemed swinging to and fro; it was as if I were still at sea. When Delcievere held the sleeping potion to my lips, I pushed it away. I wondered that Mr. Lannion wished to dose me when he thought drugs weakening.

"Pray imbibe it, like a nice little lady!" coaxed Delcie. "It's sweet and salubrious."

"No," I said decidedly, "I don't want it. Please take it away."

"Lawsy me!" she ejaculated, "where to? Mr. Lannion says you must."

Over-fatigue, disappointment, and the disagreeable sensations of dizziness and nausea made me petulant, forgetful of my manners.

"Nonsense!" I cried, and springing out of bed, seized the glass and flung the mixture away. "There," I said, putting the empty wine-glass down upon the table, "that's settled. You need not tell Mr. Lannion if you are afraid. I will, in the morning."

"My, my!" she murmured under her breath, holding up her hands in real dismay and glancing fearfully toward the door. "Lawsy me, but he'll be mad!"

"Nonsense!" I repeated, closing my eyes to avoid seeing the swaying furniture and the shifting sevens of the frieze, "nonsense."

The hoarse barking of dogs was now heard close at hand. The Great Danes had been unchained and were approaching the house. It occurred to me that they must be very annoying to the invalid, Aileen. I said so to the maid who, since my act of insubordination, had sat in awed silence by my bed.

"Mr. Lannion begged me to be very quiet when we came in, so that we should not disturb any one. But those dogs would wake the dead," I said.

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"We're all fully accustomed," was the subdued answer. "Mrs. Lucas would sleep through discharging catapults, and Dr. Despard slumbers only by artificial stimulants."

"Mrs. Lucas?" I inquired.

"Yes," said Delcie, nodding her head disapprovingly, "Mrs. Malcolm Lucas, called Aileen; and her marriage was not compounded in heaven—no. Mr. Malcolm Lucas," she lowered her voice to a whisper, "is cousin to Mr. Lannion—but he's also Satan's sure-enough son. And that's one reason," she added confidentially, "why I've decided against matrimonial alliances. First, it was through fear of *Him* growing aged. And an old nigger"—relapsing into plain speech—"is just the one thing I can't stand. Lawsy, no! Old niggers do look so for all the world like old monkeys. Whether," speaking meditatively, "it's the grizzled hair or the squizzled-up lineaments, I can't just exactly determine. Anyway, since being under the same roof with Mr. Malcolm Lucas (he's abroad now), I've decided ultimately against the state. And so I shall inform all my gentleman friends."

There came a gentle tap at the door.

"Mr. Lannion!" breathed Delcie, with a terrified look at me.

I closed my eyes in answer to her unspoken appeal, and peeping through my lashes saw her open the door, finger on lips.

"Hush!" she whispered in a tone of respectful entreaty. "Pray hush, sir. She's just floating slumberward."

"She took what I sent?" asked Mr. Lannion. His voice had a keen note of anxiety.

"She disposed of every superfluous drop, sir," was the answer.

"Don't forget that you are to remain with her," he commanded.

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"No, sir," said Delcieveve meekly, and closing the door with an air of intense relief, she returned to my side.

Presently she began to sing—in sweet low tones—the hymns of our church. And in spite of the east wind's keening cry, and the baying of the dogs, I soon fell asleep.

## VII

It was after nine o'clock when I awoke, but the dull light deceived me into the belief that it was still early. Delcie was not in the room. My bath, however, was prepared, and my toilet for the day already selected and placed in readiness. Going to one of the windows I raised a corner of the shade and peeped out. Under the window was a broad veranda roof and just beyond its edge rose two splendid maple trees. Their branches touched, intermingled.

"Baucis and Philemon!" I murmured, and thought fondly of the "Wonder Book" and of the nurse who had read and reread its pages to me.

I looked anxiously at the sky, and a great deal of sky could be seen, since there were no trees save the two maples near the house. First came a wide stretch of trimly kept lawn, then many acres of waving grass and clover, ending in a belt of woodland. Beyond the woods, the land fell away abruptly, allowing the eye to wander over an apparently never-ending world of meadows, groves, and farmsteads, to where the Sound—a light gray streak—lay very flat beneath the leaden sky. On a fine day this view would be glorious, I thought, and would give one a sensation as if flying. But now, with a strong east wind screaming past the windows, tearing at the branches of the maples, and threatening a worse tempest to come; with a sky of heavy gray clouds, the lower edge of each outlined darkly, as in ink; truly, the view was very dismal from Ornith Farm.

I dropped the shade and turned away. Max and

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Katie might come early. I must be ready to meet them. I glanced at the clock—it was half past nine! Distressed to find it so late, I made haste. I disliked being again obliged to wear clothes not my own, and struggled against this feeling. I must not be ungrateful.

The yachting suit had disappeared, but the gown Delcie had chosen was no less ugly. A thin summer silk, plaided in the same garish shades of blue, and trimmed with a quantity of beaded passementerie. Because of Max's coming, this tawdry frock annoyed me doubly.

I was again at the window, scanning the threatening heavens, when Delcie knocked. She was pleased to find me up and dressed, and said that she would fetch my breakfast at once. I inquired eagerly about the time that I might expect Katie, and learned that Mr. Lannion had himself gone to the station for her.

"Mr. Lannion will not return before mid-day," said Delcie, in her sweet drawl, "and Mrs. Lucas anticipates the agreeability of the favor of a visit from—" She hesitated, then, turning to leave the room, added: "After breakfast, of course."

"My name is Carmichael," I said, astonished at her lack of memory. And I repeated, "Carmichael, Miss Carmichael, Delcie."

She smiled vaguely, and saying something about bringing breakfast directly, slipped away. When she returned and, later, found fault with my want of appetite—for I was yet too giddy to care for food—she was still unable to remember my name, and showed much skill in avoiding the necessity of using it.

"I'll call Master Rodgers," she said, accenting the *d* heavily. "He'll enjoy introducing a sweet young lady to Mrs. Lucas and to his mamma." And picking up the tray, she left the room.

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After a few moments I grew tired of waiting for Master Rodgers and opening my door looked out. I found that all the rooms were provided with outer doors of dark green baize. Mine was fastened back, as was that of the room nearest the top of the stairs; the others were closed. This upper hall was sufficiently well lighted by the rows of windows on the staircase landings, both above and below, but it was not a bright place. Perhaps the dull gray of both carpet and walls was responsible for its gloomy aspect—and the day itself was sombre.

Presently I heard subdued whistling from below, and in another instant a small boy appeared at the head of the stairs. He was somewhat out of breath from whistling and running, and when he caught sight of me he seemed to lose what little remained to him, for he gasped and stood still. He was a thin freckled-faced boy, with sparse sandy hair, flattened down in points on his forehead, pale blue eyes under sandy eyebrows and lashes, and insignificant features. But he looked very intelligent; and the expression in his pale blue eyes as he stared at me was one of kindly if over-eager curiosity. He wore gray knickerbockers, a gray blouse with a leather belt, gray stockings, and stout shoes. The only bit of color about him was a necktie of the same garish blue as the frock that I was wearing.

I nodded to him, smiling reassuringly, and stepped out into the hall, closing my door behind me. Looking much pleased, he returned my smile, displaying two very large front teeth, and advanced quickly to meet me.

"Yes," he said, as though answering a question, "I got 'em late. Tombstones, the fellers who come here call 'em. I'm nine, I am, and I don't go to school. Pop teaches me when he's well enough, and when he isn't, I just read." Having poured forth

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this information, he paused to take breath and then said, with a humorous smile: "Now, I guess I've told all you were goin' to ask, but if I haven't, just fire away and we'll get through with it."

I smiled again, much amused. "I am used to boys," I said. "I wouldn't have asked any questions."

"Most people start in directly. First teeth, then school. Say, are you any relation to Grace Darling? I've got a picture of her saving lives in her boat. You don't look like her; her hair's black. Any relation?" I shook my head. Master Rodgers looked disappointed. "Grace Darling had grit, Pop says—pure grit clean through. Sure you're no relation?"

"Quite sure," I said. "Why did you think I was?"

"Same name," was the prompt reply. But as I stared at him in astonishment, he became very red and, looking much confused, said uncomfortably that he guessed Aileen was waiting and would I please come along?

I followed to the door nearest the staircase, at which he knocked, opening it immediately after and thrusting in his head.

"She's here," he announced in a hoarse whisper, and flinging the door wide, motioned me to enter.

I did so and found myself in a large room with windows to the north and west. A wood fire smoldered in the grate and, because of the chill of the day, its warmth was pleasing.

The room was luxuriously furnished, but here, as everywhere, dull tints had been chosen. The bed was opposite the fire, so that its occupant might watch the cheery blaze and at the same time command the fine prospect from the western windows. For, the land sloping away sharply, one could see the far-distant Hudson, like a sword without its scabbard,



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traversing the landscape. To the north, clumps of trees, planted to protect the house from cold winds, shut off the view.

But all this I did not see until later. For the door opening toward the bed served as a screen, and my attention was at first arrested by the extreme beauty of a silver crucifix that hung above a little table—or altar—placed against the south wall. The crucifix was of medium size; the figure of Christ—the White Christ—so wonderfully, so exquisitely carved that, as I gazed, there came a constriction in my throat. The patient endurance of a supreme anguish was so marvellously expressed in the droop of head and limbs.

The table, covered with a richly embroidered cloth, held a silver bowl filled with flowers, and two tall candlesticks of silver, each furnished with a thick wax candle. These were burning. But while I looked at crucifix and altar, Master Rodgers closed the door, and the invalid whom I was to cheer smiled at me from among her pillows—scarcely less white than they.

My heart went out to the poor young creature the moment her gentle blue eyes met mine, and I was ashamed that I had grudged her one week of my happy, active life. She held out a kind hand to me, and told me how glad she was that I had come to stay at Ornith Farm.

“We shall try to make you enjoy yourself,” she said wistfully, her soft eyes upraised to mine. “I hope you won’t judge of the place by the way it looks to-day. After the storm is over we shall have lovely summer weather again.” She sighed as she ceased speaking, and pushed back the braid of thick red-gold hair that had fallen over her shoulder, as if its weight wearied her. Save for her splendid hair and sweet eyes, she was without beauty, her

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features being too large. But her expression was very lovely; she looked both amiable and intelligent.

Meanwhile, Master Rodgers had propelled a chair toward me, butting it with his head as he shoved it along. "I'm an elephant," he announced, as it reached the desired position.

"And I am the Queen of Siam?" I asked, when I thanked him and sat down.

To my surprise the question seemed to alarm him, for instead of answering my nonsense, he backed away from me until he had put the width of the bed between us. From this vantage-point he stared at me with doubting eyes, evidently in fear of what might be about to happen. And the sweet-faced invalid appeared to share the boy's incomprehensible dread. A deep pink stained her hitherto pale cheeks; she stretched out her hand to me again, as if in unconscious appeal.

"I am going to ask a favor—a very great favor," she said.

Her voice shook; I saw that she spoke with effort. I took her hand and pressed it gently. "Ask what you please," I said. "I shall be glad to do anything that I can for you."

"It is just that you will let me call you"—she hesitated, her color deepened—"just that you will let me call you—Aimée; it is such a pretty name!"

"Certainly," I said, "if that pleases you better than my own." I wondered at her strange whim, although willing to gratify her.

"Cousin Rollis had a very dear friend," she went on nervously, her eyes downcast, "a Mrs. Robert Darling, of Darlington—" She flashed a quick glance at me and became silent.

"Yes?" I said inquiringly. I was interested—remembering Master Rodgers' strange questions in the hall.

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"She—she died," faltered the invalid, "quite recently."

"Indeed?" I murmured.

"Yes," Aileen continued, speaking hurriedly, "and if you don't mind I would like to pretend that you are her only child, here on a visit to Cousin Rollis—who is your guardian, dear Aimée." She paused, quite out of breath. Very much fluttered, as was but natural, I thought, at making so curious a request.

"Very well," I said, "if that would amuse you, I am quite willing."

A heavy sigh, as of relief, caused me to look across the bed at the boy. Round-eyed, he smiled at me in radiant approval of my decision, the two large front teeth making his smile doubly telling.

"Bully for you!" he said, and nodded his head at me many times with great energy.

"Jolly little Chinese mandarin!" said the invalid fondly; then thanked me for yielding to her wishes. "And you must call me Aileen," she added, "not Mrs. Lucas—that is so formal. And you shall be Miss Aimée Darling—while you are at Ornith Farm."

"To everybody?" I asked in surprise, and secretly dismayed by the idea.

"Of course," said Aileen. "It will be such fun!" She laughed and clapped her hands, as if greatly amused. But this gayety jarred upon me. It seemed forced. "Go ask your mother to come now, Roddy dear," she continued, turning to the boy. "Tell her I want to introduce her to Miss Darling."

During the few moments that followed Aileen appeared at a loss for conversation, and when Roddy returned bringing his mother, she showed much embarrassment in introducing us.

"This is Miss Darling, Mrs. Robert Darling's daughter, dear Henrietta," she said, and again the red flamed up in her thin cheeks. "Cousin Rollis has

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brought her home to Ornith Farm. We must try to make her very happy with us."

Rodgers's mother, a squarely built woman of medium height, whose light hair owed its reddish tint to the dye pot, made a stagey bow and said she was pleased to meet me. As I looked at her I knew that she must have bought the clothes I was wearing. Her own gown was the same ugly shade of blue as my plaids and Roddy's necktie. Her round eyes were like the boy's in color but not in expression; her dull complexion was roughened from an over-use of cosmetics. Altogether, her appearance did not please me, and I felt suddenly shy and very much alone.

The new-comer rustled around the bed and seated herself opposite to me. Her manners were those of a second-class actress who tries to play the gentlewoman.

"You've forgot to mention my name, my dear," she said, smiling at me with an attempt at high-bred graciousness, "so I'll tell it Miss Darling myself. I am Mrs. Luther Despard. My husband is Dr. Despard. Yes, indeed. And this is my boy, L. Rodgers Despard. (Roddy, make a bow.)"

"Oh, mother!" ejaculated Roddy, much discomforted.

"They've met already, dear Henrietta," murmured Aileen.

"I dislike the name of Luther myself," Mrs. Despard continued, quite as if the others had not spoken, "but the doctor's heart was set on it, it being his father's name. 'Very well, Loo,' I said, 'have your own way, but Luther it shall never be, only L.—L. Rodgers Despard.' Rodgers"—she spoke impressively, her round blue eyes fixed intently upon mine—"Rodgers—with a *d*."

I smiled faintly, since I was evidently expected

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to be pleased by this announcement, and bowed, murmuring I knew not what. I felt out of place, uncomfortable.

"Rodgers," repeated Mrs. Despard, "with a *d*."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Roddy, in remonstrance. His thin face was very red, and he stood first upon one leg then upon the other, after the manner of little boys when overcome by great personal embarrassment.

"Rodgers," continued his mother pompously, "after my mother's father—and with a *d*."

"Well," burst out Roddy in sudden desperation, "have it your own way, then! Pop says the alphabet's free to all. Put in four *ds* if you want, or a whole million—I don't care!"

"Roddy Despard," cried Mrs. Despard in shrill command, "look me in the eye! Look me in the eye this instant, do you hear me? straight in the eye!"

To my surprise this order threw Master Rodgers into a perfect fury of insubordination mixed with panic. He danced up and down wringing his hands and calling out in a suppressed voice that he wouldn't and he shouldn't and she couldn't make him do it. Desirous of seeing what power lay in the maternal eye, I myself looked into it with much interest. But to me the hard set stare of Mrs. Despard's round orbs expressed absolutely nothing.

Aileen now interfered, putting an end to the strange scene by asking if Roddy might run and see if her broth were ready. Mrs. Despard at once sent him, in as commonplace a manner as though nothing had gone wrong, and resumed the conversation on the same subject.

"Even if my mother's father didn't use the *d*," she said, looking at me rather defiantly, "he could have if he'd had a mind to, I guess. But the doctor is always so brusque on the subject, and Roddy's so

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smart, he picks up everything his father says. He's precocious, Roddy is"—this very proudly—"and if he could go to school he'd do wonderfully. But," she sighed heavily, "since the doctor's got to be so depleted in health we have to live where it's best for him, and Rollis Lannion asking us to spend the summer here——"

The door was opened suddenly cutting her sentence short, and Roddy, looking in, announced that the broth would be along directly and the carriage was just coming in the gate. I sprang to my feet, the hot color surging into my cheeks in my happy excitement.

"I know that you will excuse me," I said hastily—to Aileen. "I must run and meet them. I have not seen them since—since——"

I could speak no further for the tears and, turning, hurried into the hall. As I was closing the door Mrs. Despard spoke:

"Poor, poor thing!" she said. "Poor distracted child!"

But I was too much absorbed in those who were coming to wonder of whom she was speaking.

## VIII

I followed Roddy quickly and joined him as he reached the entrance door under the staircase. He grasped its big knob in both hands and, looking over his shoulder, informed me that he would open it. I smiled in acquiescence. In my breathless expectancy, speech was difficult. The carriage whirled up and stopped. Roddy flung the door wide. A chilling blast rushed in, ruffling my hair, enveloping me. And Mr. Lannion, running swiftly up the steps, caught my hand and drew me back into the hall. He was alone.

"Mr. Errol?—my maid?" I demanded, almost sharply. "What has happened? An accident—they are hurt. Oh, Mr. Lannion, tell me quickly, quickly, please!"

"Nothing has happened," he said, smiling. "They are in perfect health. What a foolish child to tremble so! And you will take cold," he went on as, still holding my hand, he led me across the hall. "Come into the library. I will light a fire, and you shall have a glass of wine to bring the color into those pale cheeks."

We entered a room lined with tall bookcases, and Mr. Lannion, after closing the door upon Roddy's inquisitive little face, made me seat myself in an arm-chair drawn close beside the chimney-piece. Throwing aside his hat and overcoat, he knelt and lighted the blocks of wood laid ready in the low grate.

"Nothing has happened," he repeated, "and you are alarming yourself over nothing. This grate is

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intended for soft coal, but I prefer wood. The heat is much pleasanter; don't you think so?"

But I was in no mood for discussing trivialities—for this light chit-chat. Indignant pain might have chased away my fears had my faith in my nurse and my lover been a whit less strong. And back of them were the boys, with Mr. Errol. Had aught occurred to keep Max and Katie from me, Mr. Errol and the boys—yes, even Aunt Carol!—would have seen to it that I was not left alone among strangers. Indeed I had, in my inmost heart, expected that all my people would hasten to rejoice with me over my safety. I had felt sure that not one member of the dear home group would be willing to wait another week before seeing me again—after my deadly peril. So I paid no attention to my host's question, but again demanded the truth.

"If nothing is the matter, Mr. Lannion, why does no one come?" I spoke imperiously, exasperated at being kept in ignorance—like a child.

"I have a letter for Aileen," he said, rising and going to the door. "If you will allow me I will run up with it at once. It is from her husband—she will want it. Then I will answer any questions you may choose to ask." He smiled back at me as he left the room, an expression of affectionate solicitude softening his stern features.

My brain was in a whirl of anxiety—bewilderment—impatience. It was like a nightmare, the non-arrival of my family and the impossibility of getting at the truth. I left my chair and wandered restlessly about the big, formal room. The huge library table in the centre, the tall bookcases, the chairs and sofas, were of black walnut. The velvet curtains and coverings and the thick carpet were dark green. The clock and candelabra that ornamented the gray marble mantelpiece and the ponderous inkstand and



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bookrack on the table were all of bronze. A great mirror that might, I fancied, conceal a door leading into the parlor, reflected the sombre room; big table, tall bookcases—everything. A somewhat ghostly and altogether depressing replica.

There were but two windows, one on either side of the fireplace; tall windows, reaching to the floor. Through these I saw a sweep of dull gray sky and a stretch of lawn and trees. Beyond, here and there, a bit of the high close fence that shut out both view and highway. I was gazing vacantly at this gloomy landscape when Mr. Lannion returned. He carried a small silver salver on which was a goblet of milk, and at his heels trotted an underbred bull terrier. The terrier was very much too large and her legs were too bandy. Save for a liver-colored spot on her side and another over one of her pale, pink-edged eyes, she was pure white. She was very ugly and looked ill-tempered. I would have greeted her kindly when she ran to inspect me, but Mr. Lannion spoke sharply to her, sending her away.

"Go and lie down, Malvina," he said, "and don't make a nuisance of yourself!" Then as she retired, miserable and crestfallen, to the hearth-rug, he begged me to drink the contents of the goblet. "It is milk-punch," he said. "Jasper makes excellent milk-punch. It is just what you need to build you up. You must have one at noon every day." He glanced at the clock. "It is now twelve."

"No, thank you," I said impatiently, "I would rather not. I want things explained, please. I beg you will not keep me in the dark any longer. Something has happened that you fear to tell me but"—I stopped a moment to take myself well in hand—"but you need not fear, Mr. Lannion."

Lack of food and the swinging motion of the vessel, from which I could not free myself, made

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me oddly faint. I sank down upon a sofa, finding it difficult to stand. Mr. Lannion drew a chair close in front of me and, seating himself, again offered me the punch.

"Drink a little," he said coaxingly, "and that will encourage me to talk. Jasper will take it hard if you don't care for his punch."

I hastily swallowed some. "Mr. Lannion, please tell me. My people—they are really well?"

"I swear it," he said gravely. "Now will you drink your punch?"

In desperation I drank the over-sweet mixture and, satisfied, my host put the glass on the table and re-seated himself as before.

"I bitterly regret my long tongue," he said, his compelling eyes, as Katie had called them, fixed upon mine. "I talked too much about myself. I'm not usually guilty of such rank egotism. But you will soon be better—and forget it all. I have been very lonely, dear little Aimée. As lonely as all who have brains must necessarily be. Think what it means to me to have you here! A ray of sunshine in my house—and heart."

I stared at him in wonder. What did he mean. "You have not talked about yourself," I said, striving to be civil, "but I want you to talk about my affairs now, please. What is the matter? Why does no one come to me? Why don't I have even a letter from home?"

He sighed, then, taking my hands in his, said very gently: "You forget that this is home now, dear child. I hate to remind you of your recent loss—to speak of your poor mother. Ah, if only you would try to overcome these unfortunate fancies that have taken possession of you! If only you would strive to remember the past, sad as it is! I would rather you fretted for the old Canadian homestead, for

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pretty Darlington, for my sweet friend, your mother, than to see you as you are, my Aimée."

His manner frightened me, although I thought that having heard of the invalid's whim he now but amused himself by playing with it.

"Since Mrs. Lucas is ill," I said, and, in spite of myself, I spoke haughtily, "I am willing that she should call me by any name that pleases her, Mr. Lannion. But I prefer to be Miss Carmichael when she is not present."

"My poor child," he said sadly. "My poor deluded little girl!"

"Mr. Lannion," I cried imperiously, "I can't stop here for a week, after all. I must go home at once—I—" I ceased speaking, silenced by the expression in his gray-green eyes—a wearied look of patient endurance.

"Aimée," he asked gravely, "have you forgotten everything about the past? It is so terribly sad for me to have you imagine yourself that poor drowned girl. Try to be reasonable, try to forget my imprudent talk. If only I had not shown you that wretched newspaper! I can't think what made me—and then to tell you of my meeting her as a child, and again later! I had no business to forget your abnormally vivid imagination—I can't forgive myself!"

A flood of strange thoughts swept into my mind; while Roddy's questions about Grace Darling, the invalid's embarrassment when making her peculiar request, and Mrs. Despard's remark when she thought I had left the room, crowded back into my brain. Then I remembered Delcie's unwillingness to use my name. Who was the drowned girl of whom Mr. Lannion spoke? I tried to steady myself. I looked away from the man before me toward the fire. Malvina, squatting on the hearth-rug, stared furtively back at me, blinking her light, pink-edged eyes,

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licking her pink lips. I felt I must get upstairs, and quickly. But first, I must ask one question.

"I think it unkind of you to jest, Mr. Lannion," I said, and my voice shook, "and it is a jest that I fail to comprehend. Who is the drowned girl of whom you speak so—so curiously?"

"I am glad that you have to ask," he said quietly. "It is a good sign, and one that rejoices my heart. And now let me show you some pictures that may please you."

But I stuck to my point even as I had, the past summer, stuck to my saddle when the new roan ran away. Now—so it seemed—I was riding a night-mare that might run away with my reason, unless I conquered it, as I had conquered the roan.

"Finish your jest, pray," I said; "it is time that it ended. What is the name of the dead girl, Mr. Lannion?"

"The newspapers are ringing with her tragic story"—he looked at me intently as he spoke—"and it is my fault that you saw one. I met her twice—as I imprudently told you. Once when she was a little child; once again, when she was a bright young creature in her teens. The dory in which she was adrift has been found; empty, save for a wreath of flower-de-luce. Her family know her to be dead." He caught my ice-cold hands and held them firmly. "Think how it pains me to have you imagine yourself this poor drowned girl—this Hope Carmichael!"

A black fog seemed to have entered the room, to be swinging up and down between Mr. Lannion and me. I knew at last that he was not in jest but in strange earnest. I tried to rise but could not. His eyes held me, gleaming through the mist.

"You are my ward, you are Aimée Darling, and I swear to make you happy at Ornith Farm."

I made a desperate effort. I struggled to my feet.

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Then the blackness closed down upon me, there came a sound as of heavy surges rolling up the beach—did I see flashes of scarlet satin—of the wreckers' fires——?

Mr. Lannion caught me and carried me quickly up the staircase to my room.

For a time I was not quite myself, I think, since, while I knew that Delcie was tending me and that I was being got to bed, I was convinced that I was the victim of a nightmare and dared not open my eyes. I cried piteously for Katie to come to me—to wake me—to hold me in her arms. It was not until I had been in bed for some moments that my brain steadied itself sufficiently for me to realize where I was. Then I heard some one enter the room. I looked up. Delcie and a stranger were bending over me, while all the sevens in the frieze stood on tiptoe—watching.

The stranger was tall and thin. His hair and eyes were intensely black, the latter very bright, with the hard metallic lustre that betrays ill health, while his complexion was of a dead greenish white—although thick. His features were clearly cut, the nose high; and he wore a mustache and imperial—the former waxed—thus increasing a resemblance to the third Napoleon.

"You are a doctor?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, smiling kindly. He had a pleasant smile. It gave me courage. "I am Dr. Despard, and you are to drink this nice cordial." He slipped his arm beneath my pillow and deftly lifted my head higher, while he held a wine-glass to my lips.

"It is to make me sleep?" I questioned.

"Yes," he said, "and to help you to grow strong."

"No," I said feverishly, "no, I won't take it; I don't wish to sleep but to go home. An hour's rest

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—then I can get up. There must be an afternoon train—and you will help me, oh, I am sure that you will help me to get away from here, to go home!”

I looked into his face eagerly. Its expression of quiet gravity did not change. I saw myself reflected in the shining pupils of his hard black eyes. He withdrew his arm from beneath the pillow and stood upright.

“You must lift her, Delcie,” he said; “it is beyond me this morning.”

Delcie came forward quickly and would have obeyed him but I stopped her. “No, no,” I cried; “you don’t understand, Dr. Despard; you must let me explain. I promised Mr. Lannion I would spend a week here—but I cannot. I must go home to-day. Listen, please listen,” and I poured forth my story.

I told him everything that had to do with my present position. I spoke not only of my betrothal day, with its fatal ending, and of my subsequent rescue and journey to Ornith Farm, but I told also of the two previous meetings with Mr. Lannion—the first, when I was a little child, and that later one, on the day that my Serge was killed. Then I described the scene in the library and repeated Mr. Lannion’s terrifying words.

“He is probably only jesting,” I said, and my voice trembled, “but he frightens me. I must go home. I am not very well, I think. I want my own people. Will you telegraph them that I am coming? I know you are not strong, so I won’t ask you to go with me to the station—Delcie will, won’t you, Delcie?” Delcie turned her comely face away. She sighed heavily. I scarcely noticed, absorbed in my appeal to this doctor who, as such, must surely understand. “It comforts me,” I went on, with an attempt at a little laugh, a very poor attempt, “to know that you won’t wish to call me out of my name. The jest

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is not an amusing one to you, I can see, any more than to me. I am Mary Carmichael, Dr. Despard, but my family call me Hope."

I held out my hands to him unconsciously as I ended my petition. I was painfully agitated. There was something very discouraging in his expression—in its unchanging kindness. Could it be possible that he would give credence to Mr. Lannion's fabrication instead of believing my story, that a doctor would mistake the false for the true?

"A very pretty name," he said gently, "but at present that does not matter. What you have to do is to strengthen your nerves. You could not stand a journey to-day, so why desire it? If you will drink this medicine for me, I will do all that I can for you—I will, I give you my word."

"You will help me to get home?" I persisted. "You will send a telegram to my family now? Will you write it for me, please? Somehow I can't manage to sit up—everything swings so!"

Very patiently Dr. Despard complied and took down the long, long message—almost a letter—that was to carry my wishes, and my loving greetings, to those at home.

"You will see that it goes at once, Dr. Despard—yes?" as he bowed in acquiescence. "Ah, how good you are to me! Indeed, indeed I am grateful."

"Then drink this," he said.

Anxious to show my thankfulness I obeyed. He smiled approvingly and, wishing me a refreshing sleep, left the room. As he was passing out, he spoke to some one in the hall; he did not lower his voice.

"Don't take it so hard," he said cheerfully; "she'll be all right in a day or two, I think."

A question was asked. I did not hear it, but part of Dr. Despard's answer reached me distinctly:

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"They always dislike their best friends, Rollis," he said, "when suffering from mental delusion."

The door closed. I started up in bed, terror-stricken. "Oh, Delcie," I wailed, "what shall I do—what shall I do? Ah!"—I stared at her in horror—"you believe it, too. I see it in your eyes. No, no, don't touch me, don't come near me! I will go home—I will get up—I——"

She caught and held me as, half frantic, I tried to struggle out of bed. She besought me to have patience, to wait—to wait only till the morrow. Then, cradling my forlorn young head upon her breast, she strove to soothe me with caresses, with tender words.

"Go by-low on Delcie's heart, honey-love," she whispered protectingly. "Delcie will stay close, close to her bright young bird, never fear!"

I clung to her, weeping bitterly. But as she fondled me, the powerful drug dulled my senses and I sank into a very stupor of sleep.



## IX

"No, I'm not bigotried," said Delcie. "I opine that Romantic Catholitism is better than nothingness. The priest that comes to Ornith Farm—Mrs. Lucas' minister—seems unhurtful. (A little fat gentleman; hurrying in, scurrying out; his eyes watching his own fat feet flying, and never looking at no one whatsoever.) No, I'm not bigotried—but I knew my honey-love was Eepiscopalian-born the minute I observed her! There's differences, 'normous differences. And we Eepiscopalians-born can't help consciousnesses of them."

She tossed her head, a smile of gentle pride curving her full lips. She was seated by the window darning stockings—Roddy's stockings. There appeared to be holes everywhere in Roddy's stockings. I lay in bed, as I had lain for the past three days; always thinking—thinking.

It was a lovely June morning. The scent of the flowering grasses was wafted in through the open casement. The big maples, Baucis and Philemon, whispered together, rustling their branches softly, very softly.

I had kept my room ever since Mr. Lannion had carried me there, after the scene in the library. It seemed a very long time—so much had I suffered and thought. At first I had pleaded with Dr. Despard, begging him at least to prove my insanity by sending for the Carmichaels and Errols. Let them see me and renounce me before he decided upon my case. Finding that he would not, that he insisted upon crediting Mr. Lannion, I assailed him

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with bitter reproaches, with denunciations of his conduct, and—at last—I went so far as to promise a large sum of money if he would but set me free.

To pleadings, reproaches, and attempted bribe he turned alike a deaf ear. He was patient, courteous, attentive, and most earnest in his effort to restore my health; and he saw to it that no one—save Delcie—entered my room. This last being the one request that he granted me. When I would permit, he talked of Mr. Lannion, of his affection for my mother (Mrs. Robert Darling). Their friendship, Dr. Despard assured me, had endured for years, and it was because of this friendship that Mr. Lannion had become my guardian and brought me—when Mrs. Darling died—to live with him at Ornith Farm.

I had cried out at first against this monstrous fiction. Then reason had bidden me hear everything that I might of my enemy—of his story. Because of my upbringing I was at a great disadvantage. Even my thinking—as far as might be—had been done for me. The time had come when I must learn to take care of, to think for myself. I found it hard—wellnigh impossible. But I had faith in Max. I knew that he would not believe me dead until years had come and gone. I felt sure that he would persist in thinking that I had been rescued—that to him the empty dory would carry not despair but the belief that I had been saved. Even now, I said to myself with reviving courage, everything was being done that determined love could do to find me. And I must exert myself—I must do my part. So I set my unaccustomed wits to work and lay very still while Delcie prattled, thinking—thinking—trying to choose a wise plan of action.

It was in vain that I sought to fathom Mr. Lannion's motive in imprisoning me. The only reason that I could imagine he might have for his in-

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comprehensible as well as criminal behavior came from a memory of Katie's comment when—years before—I had told her of the miniature. She had suggested his having lost a little sister whom I closely resembled. Had he dwelt so long upon this chance resemblance that, when he rescued me, the cruel idea had entered his brain of changing my identity that he might replace the dead? This conception was fantastic, even absurd—yet what other reason might there be? Finally I gave up trying to understand, and concentrated all my untrained mental powers upon the course that I should pursue.

"If I'd been bigotried," continued Delcie, in sweet drawling tones, "I would never have accompanied a gentleman friend to a meeting-house (church he called it, but, lawsy me, 'twasn't nothing but a Baptist meeting-house!). The congregation was formulated of Southern niggers—no Northern colored present but me and my gentleman friend—and when those Southern niggers spied me, my, but they were mad! They couldn't endure my superiority of style, and elegancies of dress and mannerisms. If it hadn't been for the muscularity of my gentleman friend they'd have thrown me down the gallery stairs at the moment of dispersement and trampled me—they would indeed!"

"Delcie," I said, forgetting in the excitement of sudden decision to express a polite interest in her story, "Delcie, will you please ask Mr. Lannion to come?"

Making an ineffectual effort to conceal her delight in the commission, Delcie went quickly from the room. I had woven—oh, so carefully!—a little net in which to entangle Mr. Lannion's many falsehoods. He would be forced, I thought, to confess his wrongdoing and to send me home. Propped high on my pillows I looked through the open windows across

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the acres of waving grasses and tall tree-tops of the woodland to the far-away fields and homesteads, and the blue waters of the Sound. The air was filled with the songs of birds. They nested in the swaying field-grass, in the trees of the little wood, and among the boughs of the two great maples. And from the number of swallows circling past, I knew that the chimneys, too, were filled with nests. The place was well named Ornith Farm.

"Miss Honey-Love," cried Delcie, returning from her errand with her hands full of morning-glories, "I just discovered these long-tailed trailers outside the door!"

She tossed the sprays with their delicate filmy trumpets down upon the coverlet, then amused herself twisting them here and there until the quilt boasted a wondrous design in flowers. I looked lovingly at the fragile blossoms; palest pink, veined with a deeper tint; pure white trumpets; others of delicate blue streaked with snow. The flowers of my month.

"Lawsy me!" exclaimed Delcie, in a tone of astonishment mingled with awe, "I've 'broidered in a superabundance of sevens without intention."

I saw that the vines were—in many places—tangled and looped into that number, and, glancing quickly upward, caught all the sevens of the frieze staring down at their doubles.

"You do appear most sweetly beautiful!" cried Delcie, in a sudden rapture of affectionate admiration. "Any one would suppose you decorated for mortuary purposes."

As she finished speaking Mr. Lannion knocked. Although I had thought that I fully realized how distressing this interview would be, I had not known that I should find it difficult even to look at my jailer. But my aversion was so intense that at the first it was all I could do to endure his looking at me.

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I had a childish desire to turn and hide my face upon my pillow. And while I answered his greeting, I could not meet his eyes.

"My poor little Aimée," he said, as he took the chair that Delcie placed for him beside my bed, "what a sad home-coming this has been for you! I am more than thankful that you feel able to see me to-day. I have suffered from the most poignant anxiety."

"I am quite well now, thank you," I said.

I made a desperate effort to raise my eyes to his—and failed. It was only the determination to help those who were even now—so I believed—searching for me that enabled me to keep to my part. I had rehearsed the scene that was now being enacted over and over, always successfully entangling and worsting my adversary. It had not begun as I had expected, but I still had faith in my ultimate success.

"It would do you good to get out of doors," said Mr. Lannion. "I will carry you downstairs, if I may."

"No," I answered shortly.

"Jasper, then," he urged. "Jasper is strong and trustworthy."

I made another effort, and lifted my eyes to his face. "I cannot get up," I said quietly; "I have no suitable clothes."

"What is the matter with them?" he asked quickly, in evident surprise.

Having at last faced him I regarded him steadily, and I thought he, too, must have passed some sleepless nights. There were circles under his watchful eyes and he had a harassed look. His manner was humble, as of one fearful of offending. As our eyes met, he smiled deprecatingly and, leaning forward, he ventured to take my hand in his. I drew it away.

"I am in mourning," I said.

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This was my trap. I had imagined that he would exclaim, and ask me for whom I mourned. Instead, he looked well pleased.

"Despard told me I might hope for a great improvement," he said, as if speaking to himself; then, with a quick change of manner, added: "I don't believe in young people mourning, but Mrs. Despard will get you some black frocks, if you wish."

"What became of my first mourning?" I demanded, hoping still to have him at fault.

"You have forgotten that you insisted upon giving it away!" he exclaimed, as in pained surprise. "But that does not matter," he said hastily, with assumed cheerfulness. "Tell Mrs. Despard what you would like to have, and she will run up to town for the day and get the things for you."

I was suddenly so very angry that the color rushed into my face. Yet I knew that were I to give vent to my feelings, it would help Mr. Lannion. Invective, vituperation, from my lips, would but increase the belief in my insanity. Delcie, who was sewing so placidly by the window, rejoiced over my desire to see my guardian. She took this peaceful interview as a sign of my return to health. To lull suspicion was my only chance for escape.

"I will not have Mrs. Despard choose my things," I said, when I had regained sufficient control over myself to be able to speak; "her taste is too bad."

"Bad?" questioned Mr. Lannion; and for the first time he looked discomforted.

"Yes, bad," I said imperiously. "And I won't wear such vulgar clothes—such cheap finery! It's not fit to wear."

"Vulgar?" he echoed. "Cheap finery?" and I saw that he was really distressed. "Why, the amount I wired her to spend was large enough, Heaven knows!" He went to the armoire, opened it, and,

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taking out one gown after another, held each up in turn, stared at it, then flung it down upon the floor. "The colors are glaring, I admit," he said, eying the motley heap with great disfavor, "but as to cheapness—vulgarity—" He paused and looked at me.

"They are over-trimmed with cheap stuff," I explained, "and the materials of which they are made are pretentious, tawdry."

"Yet they are of silk," he urged, leaning down and fingering the mass—still wondering if I were in earnest.

"Tinny silk," I said pettishly. "But that is neither here nor there. I want Delcie to get my things. She will know how. I want black, very black frocks. I am—in how deep mourning am I, Mr. Lannion?"

He turned abruptly and stood, his back toward me, looking out of the window. "Your mother died three months ago," he said in low tones.

Again I was hot with anger. But it was righteous wrath and, somehow, it steadied me. Mr. Lannion's powerful figure filled up the window. It was as though he were purposely shutting out the light from me. I looked down upon my coverlet, gay with the lovely morning-glories and their long vines of five-pointed leaves. I took up one spray and pressed it close against my aching heart. I chose another vine of blooms, fastened it to the first, and—continuing—soon had a long rope. Mr. Lannion, having finished his survey of the landscape, returned to his chair beside my bed. I made a noose in the end of my long tether, a slip-noose.

"Delcie may go to town to-morrow, Mr. Lannion?" I spoke very gently.

"Certainly," he said. "And what are you making, Aimée?" He watched my busy fingers curiously.

"Something for you," I said quietly.

"A wreath?" he demanded eagerly.

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"And if it were?" I said. "Would that please you?"

"A victor's wreath?" he said meaningly, his eyes fixed upon mine. "Nothing could please me better. Is it a wreath, Aimée?"

"Lean forward," I commanded; but I spoke very softly that Delcie might not hear. "Stoop down, and you shall wear what I have made."

His hard eyes softened as he obeyed, and he paled slightly. "Dear little girl," he murmured, bending his tall head.

I slipped the loop I had made over his rough brown hair till it lay around his throat. The long tether dangled against his breast and fell to the floor. He touched the flowers gently with his powerful fingers.

"The wreath is too large," he said, smiling; "or is it intended for a necklace, Aimée?"

I lay back among my pillows. I felt quite faint after my exertion. His strange face had been so near mine. I gathered together the vines still untouched and held them close. My flowers. They must be to me as a buckler and a shield. I looked across their pure trumpets at the oddly decorated man, and answered his question.

"It is a necklace," I said steadily. "But it is generally called a halter. I lay the end of it in the hands of Justice. One day she will draw it tight."

He smiled at me pityingly. "Poor little child!" was all he said, but he broke the noose and tossed the long rope upon the heap of frocks behind him on the floor. "If it does not tire your head too much"—he rose as he spoke—"tell Delcie what to buy for you. But you must not over-exert yourself—your mind needs rest." And he left the room.



## X

Mr. Lannion had scarcely closed the door behind him before Delcie was rummaging through the chest of drawers in a determined search for something that I might be willing to wear. She finally unearthed a thin white frock that she declared would be quite suitable if the lace trimming were ripped off.

"With black ribbons around her waist and confining her golden-tressed curls," she said gravely, "my young lady can descend in this habiliment"—she held up the dress—"to the drawing-room. Not," speaking reflectively, "that the drawing-room is as yet thoroughly upholstered—but—well—lawsy me! it'll be a sight better for you downstairs than cooped up here with that know-nothing Richmond Nanny—who hasn't the remotest idea of conversational requirements whatsoever."

So when Nanny, the pretty chamber-maid, appeared the next morning to take Delcie's place, she found that her task was to be a short one. I announced my intention of going down to the veranda at eleven. Delcie dressed me with affectionate care before leaving, braiding my hair in a club and tying its broad black ribbon with the air of a solicitous nurse caring for a small child.

"And you'll observe if the bow of my young lady's sash ribbon is properly outspread when she proceeds downward," she said severely to the bashful Nanny, "and that that long-legged Solomon Jasper attends."

"Yaas, m'm," said poor Nanny humbly, weighed down by the responsibility laid upon her. And during the two hours that passed before Solomon was

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summoned, she only opened her lips to answer "yaas, m'm," or "no'm," to my well-meant questions.

I refused the aid of Solomon, but he stalked behind me as I made my slow way downstairs. I had dreaded passing Aileen's door, fearing that she might call to me; but it was closed. And Roddy was nowhere to be seen. The gray twilight of the lower hall was not unpleasing on that warm June morning. The glass door at the farther end stood wide, and through it I saw the lawn, the acres of hay land yet unmown, and the little wood beyond. The warm haze of mid-day heat softened the atmosphere and brought out the scent of the tall flowering grasses. I stepped upon the wide veranda where were lounging chairs and hammocks in plenty, and looked about me, hoping to find myself alone. In this I was disappointed, for directly in front, upon the edge of the veranda, his back against a pillar, his straw hat tilted over his nose, sat a man apparently napping. He proved to be only indulging in a reverie, however, for he rose to his feet with a marvellous agility and was pushing forward a lounging chair for my use before I had much more than glanced at him.

"This is the pick of the lot, Miss Darling, my word for it," he said in a soft pleasant voice. "I've sampled 'em all." He took off his hat and smiled at me cheerfully.

"Thank you," I said, returning the smile and accepting the chair. I intended to be agreeable to every one—even to Mr. Lannion, if I could.

The stranger beamed with satisfaction and fetched a cushion for my head. "Lie right back and laze for all you're worth," he advised comfortably; "that's the ticket when you're feelin' the worse for wear. I just sit and ruminate like any old cow when I'm here. It rests me awfully—even if the cud I'm chewin' isn't so all-fired sweet. I guess cows have a chunk of

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bitterish cud in their cheeks now and then that has to be munched down, else why that sweet childish verse?"

He removed his hat, placed it carefully upon the veranda floor, moved his feet close together, and pulling at his fingers after the fashion of nervous little girls when speaking a piece, recited in a high quavering treble:

~~"Do—not—eat—the—hem—lock—rank—  
Grow—ing—on—the—weed—y—bank—  
But—the—plea—sant—cow—slip—eat—  
That—will—make—it—nice—and—sweet!"~~

Then he giggled, looked about him quickly, as if taking a hasty glance at an audience, and picking up his hat as though it were a bouquet, backed awkwardly to the veranda edge and sat down, with his back against the pillar as before.

"Trouble is," he said gloomily, resuming his hat and his own personality, "weedy banks attract cows—and us. That is, banks do. We aren't so set on having 'em weedy."

"No," I agreed civilly; "banks ought to be safe."

"Yes," he muttered.

~~"I had ten cen's,  
I put it on the fence—  
I haven't seen that ten cen's sence!"~~

I watched him with great curiosity. I had never met any one like him before. He was a plump man of medium height, with broad shoulders and well-developed calves. From the way he moved, the ease with which he got up especially, I knew that he must have had an athlete's training. Indeed he seemed made of India-rubber. His face was like one of those comical rubber faces that can be squeezed into a variety of absurd grimaces at the will of the holder.

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He was smooth-shaven, and his complexion as pink as that of a healthy baby. His light-gray eyes were round and as changing in expression as his face. His eyebrows were black, and what remained of his hair—the greater part of his head was perfectly bald. I thought that he looked very good-natured.

"Solomon, thou wisest among mortals," he cried suddenly, "take thy depressing presence elsewhere!" I glanced quickly toward the door, but no one was to be seen. "He lurketh within, even as an evil-doer or an enemy," continued my odd companion, his eyes fixed upon vacancy; "his presence disturbeth me!" Then, dropping into a confidential tone, he said coaxingly: "Get out, Solly dear, do; there's a sweet little boy. I'll fetch and carry for Miss Darling. You go play in the pantry—or in the infernal regions. I don't care where you go, so long as you stop playin' pleeceman." He took off his straw hat and began fanning himself fiercely. "Woof!" he cried, expanding his lungs as if to inhale all the air possible. "I can't stand being watched when I'm idle. If I'm whittlin' now, I'm willing enough to have the little ones gather 'round, but I like to loaf in peace."

As he talked I became every moment more inclined to appeal to him for aid. My heart began to beat with painful rapidity. Yet I must, I knew, speak calmly, else I might not expect to have my story believed. The sweet air of mid-day, the glorious view from the high veranda, the gentle twitter of the birds hidden among the thickly leafed branches of the two great maples close at hand, made my strange position seem like some monstrous nightmare. Surely I could find help did I but seek it rightly! And I felt—now that the house walls no longer hemmed me in—that escape was not a forlorn hope, but a near certainty. Yet while the sense of freedom, brought by being once

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more out of doors, restored my courage, I struggled in vain for sufficient composure to speak quietly and convincingly of my situation to this stranger. The opportunity was too good to be lost. I made a very great effort and in a faint voice began:

"Would you kindly rearrange these cushions for my——"

But he did not hear me, for, as I spoke, Malvina emerged stealthily from the house and absorbed his entire attention. With the quickness of a cat he was upon his feet and clinging to the pillar against which he had been leaning, in an affected agony of terror. His teeth chattering, jaw dropped, and with his eyeballs starting from his head, he stared at the approaching bull terrier. She did not at first see him, and had advanced a few paces toward me—the object of her interest—when he cried out her name in a quavering falsetto and brought her to an abrupt halt.

"Mally," he wailed, "Viny, lovely Mally-vina, per-lease, per-lease go away!"

He shuddered violently and pretended to strive desperately to climb the protecting pillar. Malvina, looking sheepish and woe-begone, dared not move, but stood still, staring dully at her tormentor.

"Turn, oh, turn those lustrous orbs away," he continued, releasing the pillar and flinging out his arms in passionate entreaty; "they burn with awful fire! I cannot stand their gaze."

As he spoke he removed his hat and threw it so dexterously at Malvina that it fell upon her head with the effect of an extinguisher. She bore the burden meekly for a moment, then shook it off and went on staring helplessly as before. The man advanced step by step, shivering as with a very ague of terror, stretched out a trembling hand, and drawing the hat cautiously away, backed rapidly toward his pillar.

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He dropped the hat upon his head so that it rested jauntily on one ear, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, again confronted Malvina.

"Yah!" he exclaimed, in the tone of a contemptuously belligerent small boy, "why didn't you bite my head off, say? I'll tell you why, Malviny Lannion, 'cause you dassent! If I had sech pink optics as you've got, I wouldn't wink and blink at folks so, I wouldn't! And"—with a grin of derision—"ef I wore a patch over one of 'em, I'd wear a black patch, I would—not a liver-colored one. It's not a patch but a spot, ma'am, nothing but a spot!" Then, changing swiftly from comedy to tragedy, he shook out imaginary trailing draperies and, pointing an accusing finger at the miserable but fascinated Malvina, cried in awful tones: "Out, damned spot! Out—out—out, I say!"

With each "out" he strode nearer his victim, who backed before him, her light eyes uplifted in terror to his face. Reaching the door, she paused for an instant, not at once daring to turn and run away, but upon her enemy bursting into a paroxysm of laughter, she darted in as if driven by an unseen hand. The stranger's laughter was so infectious, although but assumed, that, forgetting my troubles for the moment, I laughed in sympathy. He held his sides, seeming to be overcome by mirth, then, re-seating himself upon the veranda edge, became suddenly very serious.

"Malvina," he said reflectively, "detests me. I can't imagine why. The only reason she doesn't bite me is because she can't make up her mind on which of my calves to begin. Then, too," he went on, "I never give her the chance. I'm like that old person of Cadiz

" 'Who was always polite to the ladies.' "

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I never turn my back to any member of the fair sex, least of all to Malvina Lannion. Etiquette must be remembered when that sweet dorgie is 'round. Oh!" he rose quickly, "here's Mrs. Despard and the infant come to join us. Roders-with-a-d, or d-Rodgers, get mamma a chair."

Rodgers, who preceded his mother, grinned, as in appreciation of an old but well-liked jest, while its author himself placed a chair for Mrs. Despard when she bustled out. She greeted me nervously, very much as though she fancied I might—because of my crazed condition—have forgotten her already.

"I'm real glad to see you out, Miss Darling," she said hurriedly, pushing the chair offered her so roughly along the veranda to my side that it squeaked, and left a long mark on the floor. "Nanny told me you was down, and Roddy and me thought we'd come out and keep you company for a little."

I said what civility required and smiled at the boy, who watched me with timid curiosity.

"Now you're here, Mrs. Despard," said my former companion, "perhaps you'll be good enough to introduce me to Miss Darling. Malvina came out to do the honors, but she found the atmosphere too exciting for her nerves and left before she had attended to her duties as mistress of the house."

"How you do run on, Tommy King!" exclaimed Mrs. Despard, in tones of coquettish remonstrance, rolling her hard, staring blue eyes and smiling. "What will Miss Darling think of your nonsense! I met Mally just fairly scuttling into the library as we come downstairs, and I knew you'd been teasin' the poor creature. She's all right, Miss Darling," turning to me, "if you treat her right. Just look her in the eye, firm, and she behaves like a lamb. As for Mr. King here— Oh, I was forgetting! Miss Darling, Mr. King—Mr. King, let me make you

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acquainted with Miss Darling." Mr. King and I exchanged salutations. "Tom King, as I was sayin'," continued Mrs. Despard, "will get bit, and serve him right. But I treat her with firmness; I just look her in the eye. Are you fond of music, Miss Darling? Yes?" as I responded in the affirmative. "So am I. Now that dorg of Rollis Lannion's just hates it. Yes, she does. Why, the very moment I begin to sing she brustles up and looks as fierce as fierce! But I just raise my banjo—I sing to banjo 'companionment quite a little—and look her in the eye, firm, and she runs. Roddy, go get mother's banjo and I'll give Miss Darling some music—it'll cheer her up."

"Oh, mother," remonstrated Roddy, "don't sing now. Pop's asleep."

"No, he isn't, Rodgers," insisted Mrs. Despard; "he's hurryin' to get down to see Miss Darling. There," she said coaxingly, "run along like my own sonny-boy and get me the instrument. I'll just have time for a few of my *shansonnns* before lunch."

With lagging steps the child obeyed, and presently returned with a large, much-beribboned banjo, which he deposited in his mother's lap. Then he turned to go.

"Ain't you going to stay for mother's music?" demanded Mrs. Despard, in tones of tragic disappointment.

"No'p," said Rodgers stubbornly, "I ain't," and he ran away.

Mr. King groaned gently; whether in discomforted anticipation of the coming songs or because of Rodgers's bad taste in fleeing them, I did not know.

"I was on the stage when I married Loo Despard, Miss Darling," remarked Mrs. Despard, as she tuned her banjo with energetic stumpy fingers, "and I'm



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free to confess I'm sorry I ever come off. It's hard lines to quit bein' the public's darling, and take to darning socks for a private individual—and foolish as well. Which I would never have done it had I not supposed that Loo Despard was a man as would make his mark in the medical world." She laid her banjo down upon her stout lap and, leaning across it, said impressively: "Which Loo Despard might have done easy, Miss Darling, only he wouldn't. He's smart enough, as any one can tell you, although he is—as he continually alludes to—the son of a plain farmer from upper N'York. Not but what my parents were farmers, too (they'd have been called commoners in England, meaning folks which prefer mingling in country life before town, though high-born—which my mother's father was Rodgers with a *d* when he choose to put it in). Which I never could stand country life for my own part, Miss Darling; and Nature havin' blessed me with a voice—I can fill a hall of any size—I went to Par-y"—she accented the first syllable heavily—"and onto the stage. 'Twas there I met Loo Despard—which the result you see. Here we are, livin' in this dull hole with his old friend Rollis Lannion which thinks he's too sick a man to work, when all the time——"

"Say," drawled Mr. King, interrupting the flood of words ruthlessly, "I thought you were going to carol a warble?"

Mrs. Despard stared from Mr. King to the banjo in her lap as if she had forgotten the presence of both, and wondered to see them. Then, recovering herself, she smiled at the former, adjusted the latter, and began to sing. She had not boasted too much in regard to the power of her voice. It was so loud that I regretted civility forbade my seeking the most distant corner of the veranda. Harsh, rasping, it grated on my nerves, and I was little surprised when

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Mr. King, feigning to have heard some one calling him, followed Roddy at the end of the first chanson.

"Tommy King hasn't any more ear for music than Rollis Lannion's Malvina," said Mrs. Despard, watching Mr. King's retreating figure with disapproval, "but," eying me with satisfaction, "I guess you have. I saw you start when I begun. I thought I should surprise you." I said that she had surprised me, and she was much pleased. "Before I went to Pary," she continued, nursing her banjo and resuming her reminiscences, as if talking of her past attracted her even more than singing, "before I went to Pary I sung in N'York. Then I tried London, and after London, Pary. I feel sure," she went on, "that I'd have made a big success in Pary if I'd had the chance. But you see I'd just learned some few shansonnns and got ready to start in when I met Loo Despard. I thought he had a lot of money—he spent a lot, I know—and, well, you see he hadn't, and—here we are. Rollis Lannion used to know Loo years ago, and he imagines Loo is sicker than he is, so he asked us here. Rollis is a queer man. He lets people live with him, but when it comes to spending money out of hand—lending it, you know—he's awful stingy. Loo says he was kep' dreadful close when he was a boy, which he had an awful hard time, Loo says, which accounts, of course, for his being kinder queer. He's in N'York to-day. He took Delcievere to get your things. I wouldn't expect much, if I was you. They'll be few and bought cheap, I expect. I done what I could with what he wired me to spend. I got a good many things for the money, I think, and pretty ones, too. I hate to wear the same old dud week in week out, don't you? I like a variety—it's the spice of life, you know. And I do understand colors. Blue, now, I 'most always wear blue"—she had on a blue and

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white striped cambric—"and I'm particular as to shade. I hate your dull dreary blues, there's nothing *chick* about them. A dull blue is my *bate nore*. That's the one thing that Aileen and I disagree on, colors. The poor girl's got no taste. But then she wasn't never to Pary. Pary educates the eye." She ceased speaking and stared solemnly at me.

"Has Mrs. Lucas been ill long?" I inquired.

"Goin' on two years," was the answer, "and that mare alive yet. If I'd been Rollis Lannion I'd have had her shot after she threw that poor girl and damaged her back past curing—which she made him promise he wouldn't, and there she is eatin' her head off in the stable, a regular she-devil. Rollis Lannion can't ride her because she ain't up to his weight, and Aileen won't let Malcolm—which I wish she would and break his neck. No, Ashtaroth, as she's called (meanin' Queen of the Heavens, because of a white half moon on her black forehead), is living like a lady with the meadow to roll in and a box stall to herself—biting and kicking all she pleases, while poor Aileen lies a-bed never to rise again."

Mrs. Despard's rasping voice became suspiciously shaky, and when she finished her story, she drew out a small handkerchief with a broad border of common lace, and blew her nose noisily.

"I sometimes think I've a touch of hay-fever," she said, wiping her eyes, "I have such sneezing turns. But speakin' of that black mare of Aileen's, I believe in the old saw:

"'One white foot, buy him;  
Two white feet, try him;  
Three white feet, look well about him——'

(which Malcolm Lucas oughter have done).

"'Four white feet, go without him.  
Four white feet and a white nose——'

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which Ashtaroth hasn't, but the four white feet are all there, which, as I was sayin'— Oh!" as Solomon appeared carrying a tray, "what you got there, Jasper? Oh, I see; Miss Darling's milk-punch. Here, I'll give it to her, but," she lowered her voice, "you just wait in the hall till I call you."

Although I knew that this order was given that Mrs. Despard might have assistance at hand in case I suddenly became possessed with a desire to run away, I could not feel angry with her. She showed such true kindness in her wish to wait upon me; coaxing me to drink the punch with so hearty a desire to see me regain my health.

My luncheon was served on the veranda, and I spent the afternoon out of doors. Mr. King swung a hammock for me between the two maples, mounting into their high-trimmed branches by the aid of Solomon's step ladder. Later, he read poetry to me, and read it so well, with so much feeling, that I wondered. I took care to be in my room before Mr. Lannion returned, and I walked softly past Aileen's open door. I had done as much as I could for that day. I needed to be alone. For although I knew I ought not harbor resentment against any at Ornith Farm save Mr. Lannion and Dr. Despard, at times I had difficulty in not hating them all. And the horror of my unnatural situation so overcame me when I was shut up again between the four walls of my room that, regardless of the presence of Nanny, I flung myself face downward upon my bed and gave way to despairing tears.

I cried myself into a semi-stupor from which Delcie roused me, bustling in cheerful and important after her day in town. Pretending not to notice my miserable condition she sat down beside me, stroked my hair softly with her kind hand, and related her day's experiences. At first I did not listen, but little

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by little my attention was gained, and her comment upon Mr. Lannion proved interesting.

"Of course," she drawled reflectively, "gentlemen are all wonderfully astonished over the cost of ladies' habiliments. The comic journals now are replete with jokes on the subject of ladies' hats. But Mr. Lannion always thought I had mistaken, or the salesman elongated, the price of each article. To be sure, when I explained how delighted my young lady would be over the garment chosen, Mr. Lannion ceased his objectings." She giggled, looked wicked, and dropping into vulgar parlance exclaimed: "Lawdy me, but I bought a lot! I made the dollars fly! And I do hope," lowering her voice to a caressing murmur, "that my Miss Honey-love will bear me out."

My cheeks flushed with anger as I listened. So Mr. Lannion grudged money spent on his prisoner! Since this was the case he should spend a great deal. I would try to please each member of his household, but I would torment him in every way that I could.

I was very young, quite incapable of judging what I ought to do. My plan of conduct changed with every hour, my very unhappiness unfitting me for self-guidance.

To escape, to escape, but how? It would take a week perhaps, I said to myself; but surely, God helping, not longer than a week.

## XI

"Sometimes he pretends to forget, and calls the child Todgers and Toddy. Then, when he sees that Henrietta is really vexed, he apologizes and says innocently that he thought it was Todgers, Todgers—with a *d*. But Tommy wouldn't be Tommy if he didn't tease, and he is really the kindest-hearted man in the world."

It was Aileen who spoke, and she laughed as she recalled the sayings of her favorite, Mr. King. Many days had passed since my coming to Ornith Farm, and my people had made no sign. Neither had I been able to do anything to help myself. Delcie slept in my room, and by day I was never left unguarded. My strength had returned. I hoarded it carefully as my only weapon. I would need much strength when the time for escape should come.

Delicious warmth floated in through Aileen's wide-thrown windows; warmth, and the scents and songs of summer. The perfume of July flowers—the voices of birds and bees. In the silver bowl on the altar beneath the crucifix red roses exhaled their sweetness. And the White Christ read me a lesson of endurance. Who was I that I should cry out against my burden of sorrow, when He bore the burden of all the sorrows of mankind? I folded my hands humbly: "Dear Lord, help me!" I prayed. But silently—and Aileen went on chatting of her friends.

"Poor Henrietta!" she said kindly, "she does have rather a lonely time. And she dearly loves a crowd. The dear soul doesn't in the least realize that Cousin

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Rollis can't ask people to call upon her. It wouldn't do, you know. If I were able to be up and about he might like to entertain, but Henrietta could not receive his friends. Dr. Despard is different," she continued, "although he is not to the manner born any more than his wife. He and Cousin Rollis used to play together when they were boys—you know how it is in lonely country neighborhoods. Cousin Rollis's grandfather owned lots of land and a grand old house. When Cousin Rollis was in his teens something awful happened; I never heard what. And his grandfather, who must have been a dreadful old man," she lowered her voice, and glanced apprehensively toward the door to make sure that it was closed, "got rid of everything that he owned then and there. He gave all his property to his other grandson and Cousin Rollis never got a cent. Neither did my poor Malcolm, for that matter," she added regretfully. "His mother, old Mr. Lannion's only daughter, married against her father's wishes. I don't like to speak against the dead but I'm afraid Mr. Lucas, Malcolm's father, did run through a great deal of the old man's money—the will said so, anyway. Cousin Rollis has made plenty of money since—they say he was terribly poor for a time—and he is, in his way, kind to my husband." She sighed. "I wish Malcolm would come home. He's in France; Cousin Rollis sent him over on business. You would like him, I'm sure."

I was sure that I would not, and I hoped very much that he might remain in France until I was away from Ornith Farm. The fewer people in the house to treat me as a lunatic the better.

"If Malcolm were here," Aileen continued, "he could persuade you not to mew yourself up so. Henrietta tells me that you have not walked about the grounds yet, is that true?"

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I nodded. It was only by keeping my room, and visiting the veranda when he drove out, that I could avoid Mr. Lannion. I had seen little of him since the morning that I had twined the rope of morning-glories.

"I think you do wrong," said Aileen. "It would make me very happy if you would go to see my poor, pretty Ashtaroth. She did not mean to hurt me, Aimée. You see Malcolm bought her because of her beauty, and sent her to me before trying her. It's no wonder he trusted her; she has such sweet eyes, poor thing! And I was rash and foolish. I paid no heed to what Cooper said. She ran away, and she threw me, and—and here I am."

She stopped speaking, her big blue eyes brimmed suddenly with tears. She turned her head away, anxious, as always, to avoid pity. Wishing to help her, to pretend that I was not suffering with her, I rose, and going to one of the western windows, leaned out.

"Of course I will go and see the mare," I said lightly, when able to speak at all. But I remained where I was that my eyes might have a chance to dry.

The kitchen of the house was in the basement and at the same corner as Aileen's room. Up the steps from its area there now came a woman. I had not seen her before, but I knew that she must be Solomon Jasper's wife; Zayma, the cook. She was handsome, but unpleasant looking. As I stared down at her I thought of Egypt, of the Nile, and of the pictures of its temples with the sculptured faces of the Rameses upon their walls. Zayma's face was as hard as if carved in stone. The dark skin—gray-black—might have been drawn over granite; but smoothly, without a wrinkle. I saw that she was watching something, for she paused in her ascent



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of the area steps—then advanced slowly, cautiously upward.

The object of her interest was a young robin. It hopped awkwardly, now here, now there, on the smooth grass, in an aimless, foolish fashion. Its parents, nervously viewing Zayma's approach, uttered warning cries in vain. The little fluffy bird either did not understand or lacked courage to try its wings in flight. At the same moment I caught sight of a large black cat, with breast and paws of white, coming out of the kitchen door. It did not follow Zayma, but stood, languidly moving its snaky tail from side to side, watching her movements with intentness. I leaned far from the window. I scrutinized it carefully. It looked like a very old cat indeed. I was glad. It could not catch the bird, I thought.

Then, suddenly, I divined what Zayma was doing, for she drew nearer and nearer to the little robin that seemed fascinated by her steady gaze, as by the eyes of a black snake. I was about to cry out, to call to her to stop her wicked work, when I remembered Aileen. She was in such fragile health, she must not be alarmed. As I paused in doubt Mrs. Despard entered. At that instant Zayma pounced.

I did not wait to see if she had caught the bird, neither did I stop for excuses. I flew downstairs, opened the library door without knocking, and ran in. The room was empty. But a door that I had not before noticed, between the bookcases on the north side of the room, stood ajar. I pushed it open and entered. Opposite me were two large windows admitting the north light that artists need, and before one of these windows was an easel holding an unfinished picture upon which Mr. Lannion was even then at work. His coat was off, his shirt sleeves rolled up; he was very much absorbed. Beside the

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easel lay Malvina. When she saw me she rose and advanced a few steps, dislike in her pale, pink-edged eyes. Her master turned to see who had invaded his sanctum thus boldly, and as he turned I rushed into speech.

"Zayma is by the kitchen door catching a young robin for her cat!" I cried. "Go quickly and stop her."

He laid down palette and brush and pushed forward an easy chair. His inattention to my words, his slow movements tortured me. "Oh, go quickly," I commanded, stamping my foot, "or you will be too late!"

"Will you give me an hour—if?" he demanded.

I understood. I must pay for the bird's life. "Yes," I sobbed, "if it's saved." And I took the offered chair.

"On guard, Malvina!" was the hasty order and, with a warning glance at me, he left the room.

Malvina crouched down before me, her eyes upon my face. I knew that in her secret soul she hoped that I might move. Then she would be at liberty to bite me, and she would bite hard. I did not resent her hatred. Upon our first meeting Mr. Lannion had spoken to her crossly, and relegated her to the hearth-rug. Upon our second, I had witnessed her humiliation, her flight from Mr. King. It was impossible for me to explain to the creature that I was as anxious to be away from Mr. Lannion as she was to be rid of me.

"Poor Malvina!" I said pityingly. "Poor, poor dog." Malvina stirred uneasily and licked her lips.

I looked away from her to the unfinished picture upon the easel. It was the picture of a meadow gay with flowers; autumnal flowers. Purple asters and waving golden-rod. A graceful girl—a slender,

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white-robed figure, with golden hair—was gathering a tall spear of yellow blooms.

"Proserpina, gathering flowers," I remarked politely to Malvina. Then I flushed painfully, for in the girl of the painting I recognized myself. And for the first time a suspicion of the truth—of the reason for my being a prisoner at Ornith Farm—flashed through my mind.

"I got there in time," cried Mr. Lannion from the end of the library. "I returned it to its parents. They may live to regret that you interfered," he added, coming into the smaller room. He spoke with unaccustomed gayety, and looked, as he smiled down upon me, both animated and happy.

"There, Malvina," he pushed the dog with his foot as he spoke, "that will do. Be off with you! Go to your rug and lie down."

"You might at least speak civilly to her," I said coldly. "She has obeyed you to the letter—she has not moved since you left the room—she ought to be praised."

He smiled, raising his eyebrows as if in good-humored surprise at my severity. "Set me a good example then," he said lightly. "Haven't I earned a word of commendation? Won't you say something kind to me?"

"I should like to go for a walk," I said. I looked down, that I might avoid the expression in his eyes, an expression that I had hitherto failed to read aright. "Will you take me to see your garden, Mr. Lannion? And your horses, too?" For answer he began to put on his coat. He was greatly pleased; excited even. "How well you paint," I continued, glancing toward the picture. "Is it Proserpina? Yes? But did she gather golden-rod, and where is Pluto?"

"I keep him in the background," was the answer.

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"Ugly, middle-aged men are out of place in pictures."

"Yet he is coming, all the same," I murmured. Then said hastily, fearing his reply, "Did you tell Zayma never again to catch birds for her cat, Mr. Lannion—or mice?" I added. "She might catch mice in live traps, and give them to him to play with. Come," I rose quickly, "let us go at once and tell her. She is a cruel-looking woman."

"Jasper shall tell her," said Mr. Lannion. "I am tired of interviewing Zayma. I want to talk to you."

"Malvina wishes to come, too," I said, as we left the room; "pray let her."

"I thought you did not like her," was the surprised comment as he whistled the dog to heel.

"What has that to do with it?" I asked, surprised in my turn.

"In that case why wish to give her pleasure?" he demanded.

"Somebody might better be happy," I said, indifferently. "I hope I may never deprive any creature of its sunshine."

"You will need this to protect you from too much," he said quickly, picking up a sun umbrella as we passed through the hall. "The sun is scorching to-day. We must not let it burn your pretty fair skin."

I pressed my lips tightly together. I had been venturing upon very thin ice. Let me stop in time. I walked quietly by his side, submitting with a good grace to being sheltered by the big umbrella. As he held it carefully over me his arm, now and again, touched my shoulder. I did not shrink away. The new suspicion that had come to me made self-control doubly difficult. But I must control myself, or how might I hope to escape?

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The garden was, fortunately, not far distant. We crossed the avenue, followed a path between two short stretches of turf, and stopped before a small gate in a picket fence. Behind the fence grew a high, very thick hedge of privet, and above the hedge one saw the tops of a forest of fruit-trees. It was an ugly garden. Long and narrow, with but two paths intersecting it, like a cross laid flat upon the ground. Where the arms of the cross joined the body—the main path—was a circle of grass, and in its centre the basin of a fountain. Around the grass circle ran a broad gravelled pathway; at its farther edge, as along the edges of the paths leading to it, were more fruit-trees. The basin was full, not of water, but of broken bits of bricks and glass. Under the branches of the trees I saw beds of vegetables.

"There is an old bench at the end of this path," said Mr. Lannion. "Wait and I will bring it. You can rest here; it is such a pretty spot."

"Pretty!" I exclaimed. "I think it is dismal."

"Dismal!" echoed Mr. Lannion, "dismal!" And he stared about him, evidently wondering what I could mean.

"Yes, dismal," I repeated. "A choked fountain; weedy pear-trees; stupid vegetables; few flowers—and an odor of cabbages and mould."

"Cabbages!" he exclaimed, in tones of eager remonstrance, "those are cauliflowers. And there are nice beds of strawberries, and whole rows of raspberries. Don't you like raspberries, child?"

"I wish that this fountain were playing," I said pettishly. "I wonder that you cared to invite me to walk in such a dreary spiders' den." I ignored the fact that I had invited myself and Mr. Lannion did not venture to remind me. "If the fountain were playing in the sunshine," I went on, "and great vases of flowers marked the entrance to the paths;

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if big-leaved water-plants grew close, close around the basin, so that the spray kept their leaves always wet and shining—why, then, Mr. Lannion,” I turned and smiled up at him suddenly,” I should not think it strange if you wished me to sit here with you, under the pear-trees’ shade.”

He flushed deeply, and stood, without speaking, staring at me as though puzzled by my manner and words. Then he left me abruptly, and going to the end of the main path returned with the bench which he placed on the edge of the gravelled circle in the shadow. I surveyed it with disfavor.

“What a rickety old affair!” I exclaimed, and added, touching the gray-green wood with a finger tip, “and mouldy, yes, quite green with mould!”

Mr. Lannion took off his coat and spread it on the seat. “Now it will not stain your pretty white frock,” he said, smiling. “Sit down and rest; you must be tired.”

“My first walk, yes,” I said, “so, of course, I should rest. I will tuck up my feet, if you do not mind.” And I absorbed the whole bench, leaving no place for my companion.

“That’s right,” he said approvingly. “The path is good enough for Malvina and me—isn’t it, Mally, you old goose?”

Malvina, blinking disapprobation, so manifestly thought it all wrong that Mr. Lannion laughed, thus increasing her discomfort.

“So you want the garden beautified, do you?” he said, smiling up at me. “A fountain playing, vases of flowers—goldfish, perhaps?”

I shook my head. “No fish, please, Mr. Lannion.” I wanted no prisoners for pets.

He drew out a note-book. “I will write down your orders,” he said.

“Not my orders.” I spoke indifferently. “Say

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rather my suggestions. I consider your garden uninviting at present, that is all. I wonder what time it is? But I see you have no sundial here. A garden without a sundial always seems to me like a person without a mind."

"Do you want a sundial too?" he asked. I thought he appeared a trifle alarmed by my growing desires.

"Are sundials expensive?" I successfully kept my voice expressionless.

"I imagine so," was the answer; "but never mind, if you really want it." He looked at me questioningly. I avoided his glance.

"I have no watch," I said, staring absently at a distant vegetable bed. "I need a watch very much, Mr. Lannion. It does seem odd that I should have forgotten how much money Mrs. Robert Darling left," I continued, speaking confidentially, and turning from the vegetables to look straight at my companion. "I have not the remotest idea what my income is, Mr. Lannion. Is it large—or small?"

"I wouldn't worry about that now," he said quickly, looking down at his note-book. "There is enough for you to have what you want, I guess."

"I want a watch," I said. "Not an old watch that has been in the Darling family for years" (I had no mind for pretended heirlooms purchased at a pawnbroker's), "nor one that may have been bought for Aimée Darling when a child. No, I want a new watch."

"What kind do you want—Aimée?" he asked quietly. He still avoided looking at me.

"I am wearing black," I said, "so I want a black watch."

"You shall have it," said Mr. Lannion, and his tone bespoke relief.

If he were really stingy—as Delcie had hinted—

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he probably contemplated the purchase of a cheap black Swiss watch. I hastened to undeceive him as to my meaning.

"Yes, a black watch," I went on, "of black enamel. I want the back fairly encrusted with diamonds—or, better still, a circle of diamonds near the edge, and in the centre, A. D., in diamonds. That is the kind of watch I want, please."

"You would find the diamonds very scratchy," said Mr. Lannion; "they would tear your belts to pieces in no time. Better have one with a smooth case that will slip in and out easily."

"I am glad you mentioned belts," I said serenely, "for I need a buckle very much. I am tired of ribbon ends and sashes. I want a buckle, so that I may wear a belt. It, too, had better be of black enamel, and studded with diamonds—well-sized diamonds—to match the watch. And the diamonds in the watch will not wear out my ribbons, Mr. Lannion, for I want one with a chatelaine to hang from my belt."

Mr. Lannion sighed. "I am surprised that you should care for such ornate things," he said. "I fancied your tastes were simple."

"Do you disapprove of diamonds?" I inquired.

"Well" he said slowly, "I own it seems to me a pity to lock up much money in mere stones. They don't pay interest, you know." And he smiled, but a trifle ruefully.

"You think me whimsical, extravagant?" I asked.

He did not answer, but instead began absently to trace initials on the gravel with his pencil. I leaned forward. The letters were small, but my eyes were good. I read them easily—H. C. I leaned back. He must not know that I had seen them.

"I should think it would be well to gratify the whims—extravagant or otherwise—of those tempo-



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rarily insane," I remarked quietly. He glanced up at me quickly. I was looking at the choked fountain. "I should think"—I spoke very slowly—"that money locked up with the locked up temporarily insane might, perhaps, pay interest—later on. But of course I am only an ignorant girl, Mr. Lannion. Flashing fountains and sparkling diamonds are foolish fancies after all. I will go to the stables now, please." I rose from my bench and walked away. He followed me quickly. "You have forgotten your coat," I said, smiling, "and the big umbrella to shut away my sunshine. Dear me, dear me," as he fetched them, "how forgetful you are, Mr. Lannion! You don't think," regarding him with feigned anxiety, "that you have become—temporarily insane?"

"I am quite mad," he said in low tones, "and content to remain so."

He opened the gate of the garden, and we neither of us spoke again until we reached the stables.

## XII

The stables were farther from the house than the garden, and were built on the western slope of the plateau. A shabby group of buildings enough, I thought; and as though divining the impression they made, Mr. Lannion half apologized for them.

"I only rent the place," he said, "so I haven't cared to put any money on them. I run Ornith Farm as a farm, not as a country-seat. I have had it two years and, so far, I have made it pay. What is that I hear?" We were entering the main building. "Is Roddy in trouble?"

We stopped in the doorway to listen. On our left were four stalls, each occupied by a powerfully built carriage horse. At the back a narrow staircase led upward, and it was from some place near its top that the sound of voices came. Roddy's voice, shrill with anger, and the soft drawl of Cooper, the coachman, in gentle but insistent rebuke.

"You let me alone, Dave Cooper," piped Roddy. "It's none of your business what I do. You're a mean old hunk, you are, spying after me when you ought to be tendin' to your work! You go clean——"

"There, there," Cooper interrupted; "you've got to come up, so where's the use fightin'? If your Uncle Rollis knowed of this—well, you're aware yourself, Roddy, what would happen."

"And you're going to be mean enough to tell?" shrieked Roddy. From his jerky tones I knew him to be squirming in Cooper's grasp. "Go tell then—who cares, anyway!"

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"I ain't agoin' to tell," said the abused Cooper, "an' you know it well enough, Roddy. My, my, what a passion you're in, sonny! And Ossie real disappointed that he ain't had the chance to eat you up."

"Wait here," said Mr. Lannion, and he ran up the staircase. Only half-way, however; he paused where he could command a view of both Roddy and me. I was not to be left unguarded. There followed a stillness, a stillness with something unpleasant in it. Mr. Lannion spoke again.

"Rodgers," he said, and although he spoke quietly there was menace in his voice, "have you been trying to visit the dogs again?"

Another silence. Then Roddy answered, and I instantly thought what a little creature he was by the side of his interlocutor.

"Yes, Uncle Rollis," he said.

"You remember what I told you I would do, if you disobeyed me?" Mr. Lannion asked.

Again he spoke without apparent anger, yet again his voice chilled me with dread for the child.

"Yes, sir," said poor Roddy.

"You will come to the library at five this afternoon," commanded Mr. Lannion, and turned to descend the stairs.

"Yes, sir," came the faint answer from above.

I looked out of the doorway pretending to be absorbed in the view. Presently I saw a man hastening toward the stables. "Here comes your familiar," I said over my shoulder to Mr. Lannion, as he joined me.

"Jasper!" he exclaimed. "Now what on earth does he want?" and he went forward to meet his factotum. "I shall have to return to the house," he explained, when Jasper had delivered his message. "Some men have come on business." (The blood

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surged into my face as I thought of rescue.) "Old friends of mine," said Mr. Lannion, crushing my hopes—with intention, I suspected, "but unwelcome at this moment," and he smiled at me. "Jasper shall stay to escort you back to the house when you have inspected the horses. Don't over-fatigue yourself, Aimée!" And he hurried away.

I did not know whether to follow or not. Had he told the truth in regard to the visitors? Cooper, descending the staircase with lagging steps, put an end to my doubts.

"I hope them men from town—the same party as was here last month, ain't they?" He looked at Solomon who nodded. "Well, I hope as they'll disembarass his head of Roddy's doin's. You think not?" in answer to an expression of dissent from Solomon. "Well, well, then I guess the little chap will jest have to grin an' bear it. I'm awful sorry for the child."

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"Above," said Cooper, jerking his thumb upward; "hay-loft; it's his lair. Yes-yes," he went on, speaking meditatively, "it's his reg'lar lair. He goes there to enjoy secret treasures—green apples and such like—and to hide his lamentin's. An' I guess, when all's said and done, we've all got our lairs. Yes, sir," staring steadily at me, "yes, sir, we have so. For, when you come to think of it, we're mighty like the dumb beasts, after all. We don't run inter holes to die 'cause circumstances (meaning relations, friends, or poor-house doctors) forbids; but we turn our faces to the wall, doin' our best to make a solitude of our death-bed. Yes-yes, we do. An' I calliate we ain't so different from the poor beasts as the ministers pretend. An' often we ain't so well worth prayin' over, neither; no, sir, we ain't."

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"What did Roddy do?" I inquired. I was anxious about the boy.

"I'll show you if you care to see," said Cooper, and led the way upstairs.

Solomon Jasper, leaving the door-post against which he had been leaning during Cooper's remarks, followed to the foot of the stairs where he remained, his large dark eyes fixed upon me.

"Jest look out of here," continued Cooper, pointing to an open window near the top, "an' I'll show you what that little chap tried to do."

I looked out. Beneath us, built against the lower story of the stable, was an enclosure about a hundred yards square. The fence surrounding it was very high, the close boards separating into pickets at the top. In the enclosure grew a Norway spruce, making a clump of shade, and near it stood two kennels. The grass had been scratched away in spots and looked mangy. Because of this, of the height of the fence, and the appearance of the two dogs that squatted before the kennels, the place seemed to me like a den of wild beasts. The dogs were the Great Danes whose deep-throated baying had kept me awake many a night since my coming to Ornith Farm. The larger of the two was striped black and yellow—like a tiger. The other was dun, almost black.

"Pretty puppies, ain't they?" said Cooper admiringly. "High, Ossie! High, Hermie, ol' man!" The dogs moved their tails languidly, in dull response to his greeting. "If 'twas dinner-time you'd see 'em skip"—Cooper spoke apologetically—"but the heat, an' bein' up all night, makes 'em tired."

"What did you call them?" I asked. "I did not catch their names."

"Their names is awful ugly," said Cooper; "an' though Roddy learned me how to pronounce 'em, I shorten 'em up a bit. The one liked a striped tiger-

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cat is Osirus, an' t'other is Hermes Tris—something——”

“Trismegistus?” I suggested.

“Yes, sir,” said Cooper, “that’s it. Now that boy is jest set on playin’ with them pups—wants to tame ’em, he says—and Mr. Lannion wants them kep’ fierce; says he won’t have ’em mauled by wimmen an’ children. Him and me and the doctor is the only ones they know. Roddy says”—I saw that he was both fond and proud of the boy—“he says, says he, ‘Dave,’ he says, ‘how’d you like it, Dave,’ says he, ‘ef no one never talked pleasant to you? How’d you like,’ he says, ‘to be shut up all day in this hole, an’ fed an’ treated like a dangersome lunatic in a ’sylum cell——’ ”

Cooper stopped speaking abruptly. He looked greatly alarmed, and eyed me in a helpless state of embarrassment. That he felt he had stumbled upon an unfortunate expression was almost absurdly apparent. Lunatics must not be mentioned before a person temporarily insane.

“Does Roddy try to carry out his plan of taming them?” I asked, looking down at the dogs and trying to help the man out.

“Yes, sir—miss, I mean,” stammered Cooper, still uncomfortable.

“But how can he?” I demanded. “He can’t possibly get in here.”

“Yes, sir, he can,” burst out Cooper, forgetting me in his pride in the boy’s cleverness. “He’s the cutest little chap alive! First he tried the fence, an’ Mr. Lannion caught him jest as he’d squeezed through them top pickets an’ was ready to drop in. ’Twas then he got his orders to keep out. But, bless you, when Roddy’s set in his mind, it takes more’n a threatened lickin’ to turn him! And this very morning”—Cooper spoke slowly and impressively—

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"he tried again. Yes, sir, he did—with a rope; yes, yes, a rope. An' I happened along in time to catch him an' haul him in—an' he did some lively kickin', I can tell you! Ef I'd had the least idea—" He broke off abruptly. He had not glanced toward Jasper, but I fancied he had suddenly remembered the presence of his master's confidential man. "But you come out, I calliate, to see the horses," he recommenced carelessly, "an' not to listen to me hold forth. Ef you'll step downstairs I'll trot 'em out for you."

"I will see Ashtaroth first, if I may," I said.

"Ashtie? Oh, yes, ef you want," and he led the way through a side door to a well-sized box stall.

I looked long at Ashtaroth, and I did not wonder at Aileen's affection for her.

"Four white feet, yes, sir," said Cooper, "but they don't make a mite of difference, to my thinking. (Mrs. Lucas, poor lady, is awful proud of that white half-moon of her'n.) And some hold that black horses ain't as good as, well, we'll say chestnut or bay. I used to b'lieve that you couldn't do better'n buy a sorrel—as we called 'em down the Island. Mr. Lannion he sticks to it that color doesn't matter a mite. He's got a kind of leanin' torge black horses, he has. Not that he bought this mare. No, sir; 'twas Mr. Lucas as done that—an' a poor day's work it was for his wife. But there, she didn't know no more 'bout horses than a kitten! Ride the mare she would, to s'prise her husband when he got home. Well, well, she did s'prise him, sure enough." He sighed. "You wouldn't have hurt her a purpose, would you, Ashtie, ol' girl?" The mare turned her beautiful head and looked at him with affection. "She knows me," he said proudly, "and she likes me, too. I'm the only man here that can handle her. The reason she don't come right up to me is because

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of you. She don't take to strangers. She's a Arab, Ashtie is," he continued, becoming every moment more expansive in his praise of his favorite, "and she's got all the best points of her breed. Look at her head. Light an' elegant, ain't it? An' the shape of them shoulders—oblique, like they'd oughter be. Look at her deep chest, high withers, an' them fore-legs, set so well for'ard. The truth is," he lowered his voice and spoke with plaintive seriousness, "she's got all the points she oughter have, yet she's no good to nobody. She was ruined when she was broke." He looked at me sadly for a moment, then said gravely: "And that's why I take on so over the boy." He jerked his thumb upward, indicating Rodgers' hiding-place. "Mr. Lannion don't know it, but he's breakin' him all wrong. Mr. Lannion's idea is: Lick 'em seldom, but when you do lick 'em, lick 'em inter welts. Yes, sir," as I contemplated him in horror, "yes, sir, that's Mr. Lannion's idea—and, in regard to Roddy, it's wrong. I know Roddy," he went on slowly, glancing quickly over his shoulder to make sure that Solomon was out of ear-shot, "and I've seen the welts."

"Why doesn't his father interfere?" I asked, lowering my voice, too, because of Jasper.

"The doctor says," said Cooper with quiet disapproval, "he says, says he, 'I was ruined by gettin' too few beatings. The more beatings the boy gets,' he says, 'why, the better for the boy,' says he. Mrs. Despard she takes on over it at times, but"—with slow contempt—"she, well, p'raps she was broke wrong, too. There's a time to keep your heels quiet, and there's a time to up with 'em an' lash out hard. Mrs. Despard she kicks at the wrong time. She don't never succeed in anythin', she don't." He stared sadly at the mare. "She's as pretty as a picter, ain't she?" he said in fond admiration, returning to a more



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pleasing topic. "See how wide she is between the eyes—an' such eyes! I call 'em beautiful; as soft and as gentle as a deer's! I tell you what, they can flash fire!" He chuckled, as if in fond remembrance of some past scene. "She's just fifteen hands, one inch," he added; "a perfect height for a lady's saddle-horse. Yet she'll never be used again."

He became silent, lost in reflection. As I looked at him, it occurred to me how like a horse he was—but not an Arabian. No, with his melancholy faded brown eyes, his long, thin face, and long, yellow teeth, he resembled a patient farm horse. Such an one as is often to be seen gazing with gentle gravity over the old gray fence of some home field.

"She is Dexter's height," I said musingly, as I turned again to the mare. "'A big-little one'—as they say."

Cooper stared at me for a long moment. When he next spoke his manner was still more confidential.

"The first time I went inter this stall," he said solemnly, "I thought I'd never get out alive. A bad broke ordinary horse is wicked enough, but a bad broke Arab is ferocious. They resent ill-treatment like no other horse does. I calliate it's because all their forbears was treated kind. Well, sir, when I entered inter this stall, Ashtie she flattened them delicate, small, thin ears of hers tight down to her head, and she lay in wait for me. I walked right up to her—'taint no good to stand away off from a horse an' holler! When I got near she gave one squeal, an' baring her teeth jest grabbed my coat and shook me like I was a rat. How I got free I don't know, but the minute I did, though I was awful dizzy, I hauled off what remained of that coat an' giv' it her. 'Eat it up,' I says, 'ef you want,' says I, 'an' all my clothes,' I says, 'but out of this stall I ain't goin' till we're friends!'"

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"Yes," I said eagerly, "yes. And then?"

"You see," drawled Cooper, "I'd locked the stable door 'fore I started in. I wanted to do it—an' to do it alone."

"Yes," I urged, "yes; and how did it end?"

Cooper wagged his head at the mare in fond rebuke. "You behaved awful bad, Ashtie, didn't you? (She knows I'm talkin' about her," as the mare drooped her proud crest, "and she's sorry to this day.) For you see"—he dropped his voice to a mere whisper lest the mare's feelings be hurt—"she worried all the clothes off me afore she was done—and that stopped her. For she ain't a cannibal, Ashtie ain't, an' she's thoroughbred through and through. And you mustn't think as she carried on like that afore Mrs. Lucas rode her. No, 'twas after the accident; the night of that same day. She came on a Wednesday evenin', Ashtie did. I got a wire from Mr. Lucas to meet her at the station. Mr. Lannion he was away. The mare was awful nervous all the way home; snapped at me kinder fierce when I fixed her for the night—seemed to expect to be hit or somethin'. An' when, the nex' morning, word come for her to be saddled for Mrs. Lucas, I advised strong against it, I did. 'Giv' her time to look 'round,' I says, says I. 'She's strange yet,' I says, 'jest giv' her time.'" He opened the stall door, swept the sheet off the mare, and stood back. "Look at her," he said, "an' judge ef any lady would have b'lieved she wasn't a lamb!"

Ashtaroth rested her dainty nose against the man's shoulder fondly, while he stroked her glossy black side with melancholy pride.

"She was unwillin' for me to saddle her," he said, after he had carefully replaced the sheet and rejoined me outside the door, "swellin' herself out till I thought I'd never get the girths buckled as taut as they'd oughter be. Ef Mrs. Lucas hadn't been un-

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common spry I calliate she'd had a hard time mountin'. What happened after I don't jest rightly know, but I'm of opinion"—he lowered his voice again—"that Ashtie must have shied an' scared Mrs. Lucas, who, bein' no horsemoman, poor lady, lost her nerve an' struck the mare sharp an' sudden." He paused, shook his head sadly, then said: "Mrs. Lucas behaved grand after, I'll say that for her! Wouldn't hear of poor Ashtie bein' shot (which was what Mr. Lucas was all for doin') or sold—as Mr. Lannion said must be done. No, sir; Mrs. Lucas says, says she, 'The mare's too dangerous to be rode by any one,' she says, 'but she's too beautiful to be killed,' says she. An' she got Mr. Lannion's solemn promise to let her be. He grumbles some over her eatin' her head off an' no profit—but he let's her be. And to tell the real truth Ashtie hadn't oughter be ridden by no lady, for when one of her wild fits is on her, she ain't fit to be trusted, Ashtie ain't. And I'd like to meet the feller what broke her," Cooper wound up with sudden fierceness. "I'd break him, I would!"

"After twelve o'clock," said Solomon laconically. He had come up behind us unheard. "Your dinner-time, Dave."

"So 'tis, sure enough," said Cooper, startled. "I hope I haven't talked too much about the mare."

I thanked him. He had interested me greatly, and I said so. Then, Solomon following at a respectful distance, I returned to the house. I walked very slowly. Cooper had not appealed to me directly on Roddy's behalf, yet I knew that he hoped I might help the boy. I thought and thought. At Ornith Farm much thinking, I found, was needed. And one grew very much older with every day.

### XIII

As I neared the house I saw that the carriage that had brought Mr. Lannion's friends was still before the door. What if Cooper had been mistaken—what if—? I started on a run. Solomon was beside me instantly, his hand upon my arm. I was about to risk everything by crying for help (everything, since were these visitors not here on my account I should lose what I had already gained by my self-control), when Mr. King stepped out from a side path. He looked from me to Solomon and back again.

"What's up?" he asked pleasantly. "A race on? Mustn't try running yet," he added, shaking his head good-naturedly; "you forget you've been ill."

"Yes," I said, trying to smile, "I did forget. But I wanted to speak to Mr. Lannion about poor little Rodgers, so I ran. Is he still busy with his friends?" I spoke breathlessly. The effort and the lie tried my nerves sorely.

"He is," was the laconic reply, "and will be till dinner-time. But what's the matter with the boy? Hasn't hurt himself, has he?"

Solomon had withdrawn to a respectful distance. I felt I might venture to ask what I must know. "Are they old friends of Mr. Lannion?" I looked toward the carriage.

"No friends at all," was the answer. "Business acquaintances. What is the matter with the little chap?"

"Do they come here often?" I persisted. "Have you ever seen them before?"

Mr. King glanced at me quickly, then looked down

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as though unwilling I should see that he had noticed my poorly concealed distress.

"I've seen them lots of times," he said in his most commonplace manner. "They were here often last winter. I know them well. Let's go 'round to the piazza. It's pleasanter there." I went with him in silence. I could not speak.

"It's a pity the piazza don't run all 'round the house, Miss Darling. I don't see the sense of having it just across the front. But it's a queer house, anyway, with its back door for its front door, and I guess an Irishman must have built it.

Mr. King kept up this good-natured chatter until he had safely ensconced me in the most comfortable of the veranda chairs, when he sank down in the one next me and calling to Solomon to bring me some refreshment, "and be quick about it," relapsed into silence. But I refused the wine brought me and, after a few moments' struggle with a desire to break down and cry, I answered Mr. King's forgotten question about the boy. He listened with the deepest interest, and when I had finished my story groaned heavily.

"Then Mr. Lannion does whip him cruelly?" I inquired. I had hoped that Cooper might be exaggerating.

"Cruelly?" echoed Mr. King, taking off his hat and staring up at the ceiling as though addressing it. "Cruelly?" His tone was smoothly ironic. "Oh, dear no, not at all. The weak hand of the gentle Rollis at one end of a good flexible raw-hide, and the uncoated shoulders of the brawny Rodgers-with-a-d—, at the other. Oh, no, not at all cruelly, dear no! But I'll tell you what it is," lowering his eyes from the ceiling and speaking with great seriousness, "Lannion's making a big mistake. You can't rule Roddy through fear. Lannion doesn't

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whip the boy often, and I honestly believe that he does it for Roddy's good, but he does it too hard. The little chap won't be able to forget—or forgive—for, well, never mind how long. I'm sorry I told you, Miss Darling. I deserve to be licked myself." He looked at me anxiously. "Perhaps you'll go for a little walk with me this afternoon—say at five o'clock? You've never been as far as the woods yet, have you? It would give me great pleasure to take you there."

"I shall be very glad to go—if Roddy can go too." Mr. King looked much distressed at his failure to change the trend of my thoughts. "The child seems old of his age."

"He is," said poor Mr. King gloomily. "His mother says he's nine, but that's only to make herself out young. He's really ninety." I smiled. "You may smile," said my odd companion, wagging his shining bald head, "but it's true. I'll bet you anything you like that that boy will come in to lunch as calmly as if no thrashing hung over him. And when he's asked why his eyes are so red he'll say that he fell down and hurt himself—or that he was in the kitchen fooling with the pepper-pot and upset it into them. He's the grittiest little devil I ever saw—begging you pardon. He says"—Mr. King chuckled admiringly—"that young shaver says, that only cowards howl over what can't be helped. He says that whatever he can't down, he means to grin and bear, because he's an American. He has likewise informed me that if you're an American you've got to be brave, because it's in your blood. He also remarked once, in strict confidence, that of course the British were a plucky lot because they were really all Americans. They had just happened not to have come over with the Pilgrim Fathers, that was all. Here comes Despard," he whispered hur-

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riedly, as Dr. Despard appeared, walking slowly around the corner of the house, "and you may as well spare yourself the discomfort of asking him to interfere, for he won't."

"I suppose he feels he ought not," I said, "because Mr. Lannion supports him and his family."

"Don't you believe it," was the sharp reply. "He earns his keep—like the rest of us. Hello, Dotty"—he rose and went to meet Dr. Despard—*wie geht's?*"

The doctor smiled pleasantly but did not speak. He mounted the veranda steps wearily and coming to my side sank into Mr. King's chair.

"Get another, Tommy, will you," his voice sounded very weak, "and ask Jasper to bring me a glass of milk."

"No you don't," said Mr. King, with a briskness that I knew to be assumed. "Nary drop of milk will I get you, Lulie. It's not lunch-time. Sherry and bitters is what you want, old man." He vanished into the house, reappearing almost immediately. "I snatched the brimming goblet from under the nose of the lovely Solomon J., just as he was bearing it, with others of its kind, upstairs to the den of milor. You just come from there, Lu?"

"Yes," said the doctor briefly. He sipped the mixture in silence, then, looking at me, asked, very kindly, how I was. "Your walk did not tire you, Miss Darling?"

"No," I said gently, "not at all. My body is quite well and strong again, Dr. Despard. As to my mind," I smiled a little, "I must distress you by acknowledging that my mind clings tenaciously to its delusions. I imagine myself Hope Carmichael, still."

"That will pass, that will pass," was the doctor's quick assurance. But as he spoke he turned his eyes from me and scanned the lovely prospect of meadows,

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woodland, and the distant, dreamy blue waters of the Sound, as though he saw something that interested him greatly. "I declare," he exclaimed, with what I suspected was an affected animation, "I do believe I see a hawk! Yes—no—yes, I am sure. You look, Tom, your eyes are better than mine."

Mr. King rose and stared in the direction pointed out by the doctor.

"I don't see any hawk," he said with deliberation, "although I guess you're right about my eyes being better than yours. You've read too many abstruse medical books, Lulie, my man; you've injured your clearness of vision." He spoke dully, as though he were very tired, and only talked for civility's sake. And turning from his search for the imaginary hawk, he stood gazing absently down at the doctor, his hat well over his eyes. "It's time you went in and spruced up for lunch, Dr. Luther Despard," he said, stifling a huge yawn. "Later, you'll have to spruce up for dinner, and by and by you'll have to make a toilet for—the night. Do you ever have the nightmare, Dotty dear?"

"You're right," said the doctor, rising with an effort. "I was on my way upstairs again, but I couldn't resist a little chat with Miss Darling and you, Tommy." And he went into the house.

Mr. King watched him out of sight, then turned his eyes upon the distant landscape.

"I always think of my grandmother on noons like this," he drawled softly. "She was a very good woman. She read the Bible a lot. Sometimes it seems to me that I can hear her voice reading bits of it aloud."

He squared his shoulders, took off his hat, and, his eyes still fixed upon the distant glory of the Sound, repeated in low, reverent tones:

"As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by fly-



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ing, so the curse *causeless*," he paused, "shall not come."

He was silent for a moment, absorbed, apparently, in very painful thoughts. Then, motioning slightly toward the splendid view spread wide before us, he said quietly: "This is God's world, child, and what I have just repeated is one of God's truths."

As he ceased speaking Solomon came out, carrying a tray. "Your luncheon," said my strange companion gravely. "*Gesegete Mahlzeit!*" and he went away.

Solomon wheeled a table to my side and setting the tray upon it withdrew to the doorway, where he could command a view of me and of the hall. I was very hungry, but I had determined to go without my luncheon. So I did not look at the tempting food, but turning from it soon forgot my appetite in anxious thoughts, for I could not understand why my imprisonment at Ornith Farm lasted so long. I knew—from Mr. Lannion's own lips—that the story of my shipwreck had found its way into the newspapers. And even supposing that my own people believed me to have been drowned, why had not Loison and the crew of the schooner spoken? Their poor knowledge of English did not account for this silence. So romantic an accident, the drowning of a young girl on the night of her betrothal, would travel far by word of mouth alone. Why, I asked myself over and over again, did not Loison and the sailors who knew of my whereabouts, hasten to tell of their knowledge? By this time they must have heard that such news would gain them a large reward.

The sound of a carriage rolling rapidly down the avenue roused me from my self-absorption. Mr. Lannion's friends were already departing. In another moment Mr. Lannion himself came out upon the veranda.

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"What is this?" he asked, glancing from the tray to me. "Doesn't your luncheon please you—or was the walk too fatiguing?"

"The food looks delicious," I said, "and the walk did me good. Your friends left earlier than you expected, Mr. Lannion."

"Yes," he said, dropping into the chair so lately occupied by Dr. Despard, and sighing as if very glad to rest, "yes, I thought I was in for a day of it; but they were in a hurry, thank Heaven! Why don't you eat your luncheon, child?" He smiled at me as he spoke, stretching out his long legs, and leaning back in his chair in a very luxury of happy repose.

"Uncle Rollis," came a faint childish voice from the doorway, "mother wants to know why you don't come in to lunch. I am to say that we are waiting for you."

The child looked very little; very little, and very forlorn. His thin, freckled face was streaked and blotched, the scrubbing to which it had evidently been subjected having failed to remove the traces of his tears. He did not look at Mr. Lannion but kept his eyes upon the distance. And I knew that it was not fear that made him do this but the desire to avoid the sight of a detested face. Mr. Lannion was making the boy hate him.

"Tell your mother not to wait," he now said carelessly. "I shan't be in for a half-hour yet."

He either did not observe or was not touched by the child's miserable appearance. It seemed to me that any one with half a heart would have seen that Roddy had already been sufficiently punished, and would have forgiven him then and there. But the forlorn little figure was allowed to reënter the house without a kind word.

"You are not thinking of letting him off?" I in-

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quired. I wondered if I could bring myself to beg for the boy's pardon. I secretly feared I could not.

"Who, Roddy?" said Mr. Lannion, looking at me with lazy content. "No; indeed. Boys need a flogging now and then. It does them good."

He was so evidently very happy, so noticeably enjoying being with me, so luxuriously at peace with himself and his world, that I was shaken by a sudden fury of indignation. I pressed my lips together tightly that I might not betray myself in speech, I closed my eyes that I might not see his face.

"Jasper," he cried to his henchman, "lower the awnings! Shall I turn your chair around, Aimée?" He spoke with tender concern. "Or will the awnings be sufficient? The glare is intense."

I opened my eyes perforce and said that the awnings were sufficient. I obliged myself to thank him, as well.

"What about your luncheon? I was forgetting it," he said presently. "It must be as cold as a stone. Suppose I send for some hot chicken—a double allowance—and lunch with you! May I—please?"

He spoke pleadingly, humbly even. I rose briskly, and before he suspected my intention had pushed the little table, with its tray, to his side.

"This is not chicken," I said lightly, "but squab, on toast. It looks delicious. And peas," I continued, "young, sweet, excellent! To say nothing of creamed potatoes, a roll, a pat of fresh butter, and a glass of orange wine. Wine that holds the perfume of the orange blossoms, Mr. Lannion; and you shall drink it."

He looked up at me strangely. He was intoxicated—without wine. "You will share with me?" he said.

I shook my head. "No," I said earnestly, "you are to have it all; squab, peas, potatoes, roll, butter,

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wine—everything! It will not be a bit too much, for you look as hungry as—” I paused, seeking a simile. I looked well at the man lounging in the big easy chair before me. Looked at his powerful figure, his rough brown hair, his long nose, his rather small gray eyes—with their greenish glint. As I scrutinized him his smile deepened. I saw the glint of his strong teeth under the heavy brown mustache.

“As hungry as what?” he asked. He appeared well pleased to have me so much interested. “As hungry as forty bears? That is what Roddy would say.”

But I—I thought suddenly of Loison. “As hungry—as a wolf,” I said slowly, and almost beneath my breath.

He laughed. “I’m not wolfish enough to gobble up your ‘little pat of butter and slender flask of wine,’ little Red Riding Hood,” he said good-humoredly, “but if you don’t object I’ll tell Jasper to bring me something here. I am very hungry.”

“You want more than this?” I inquired incredulously. I glanced at the well-filled tray. “I assure you that I shall not touch it.”

“Why not?” he asked in surprise. “I thought that you, too, were hungry.”

“I am hungry,” I said, and I turned to walk away, “but I shall not eat until to-morrow, Mr. Lannion.”

He rose quickly. He looked puzzled and a little anxious. “Pray explain,” he said.

“I have a friend who is in trouble,” I said. “I cannot bear his pain for him, but I can, by starving myself, suffer a little with him. So I am denying myself food.”

“Ah!” Mr. Lannion looked at me steadily. “It pleases you to avenge the boy—is that it?”

I was glad to see that his happy expression, his

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look of even rapturous enjoyment, had vanished. "Avenge him? No," I replied. "That is an odd idea, Mr. Lannion."

"Not odd—for a woman," he said slowly. "I punish the boy, so you punish me."

I raised my eyebrows. I glanced from him to the tray. "Punish you?" I exclaimed. "Why, I give you my luncheon, Mr. Lannion! I return good for evil. You deprive me of food when I am faint for lack of it. Yet when you complain of hunger I bid you eat."

"It has not occurred to you," he said in low tones, "that you might possibly win forgiveness for the boy without threatening to make yourself ill? What if your threat be disregarded?"

I remained silent. I wished very much that I knew what I ought to do—and say. I bitterly regretted my inability to understand—and so manage—people. If Mr. Lannion were a horse, I said to myself, there might be some hope of my ultimate success. Were he a horse I should now pretend to give him his head, leaving the reins loose. Then he would soon show what trick he contemplated playing. For Roddy's sake let me treat him as a horse—and not pull on the curb too soon.

"Why don't you try bribery, Aimée?" he suggested softly.

The trick was played!

"I will," I said gravely. "If you will forgive Roddy, I will give up the watch and buckle I asked for, thus sparing you the expense you so dread, Mr. Lannion."

And as he flushed hotly under the sudden lash of my words, I thought with Cooper that people were strangely akin to the poor dumb beasts after all. There followed a long silence. Then Mr. Lannion spoke:

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"I forgive you, because I love you," he said. "I shall not forgive the boy unless you make it worth my while."

I pointed to the tray. "*Bon appétit, monsieur,*" I said, "and for three days, good-bye!"

I ran on into the house and upstairs to my room, where I determined to remain, a voluntary prisoner, for the promised time. Delcievere appeared presently. She carried a plate of Charlotte Russe which she offered me with an engaging smile, and an elaborate pretence of not having heard of my lack of luncheon. And after I had convinced her that my decision to fast was not to be shaken by either coaxing or scolding, there came a knock at the door and Solomon handed in a basket of beautiful cherries; the first I had seen that season. But I had no intention of breaking my word, and I was ashamed of the discomfort my desire for food brought. "Who sleeps dines," says the French proverb, and I longed to seek refuge from my disagreeable sensations in a nap. But this would have meant disloyalty to Roddy, so I remained awake. Fretting over the boy's wrongs and my own I paced the room until, at half past four o'clock, even Delcie's serenity gave way.

"If my Miss Honey-love would only stationery herself to reading or something!" she exclaimed plaintively.

"Give me a bit of paper and a pencil, please," I said. And when, delighted that her advice was taken, poor Delcie quickly complied, I wrote:

"Cherries are not pomegranates, and I am not Proserpina, but *Hope*."

Folding the slip I tucked it in among the cherries and, summoning Solomon, returned the fruit to its sender. Then I went to the window and sat down. I had done all that I could force myself to do for the child.

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The minute-hand of the little clock crawled slowly, slowly. Five minutes passed—ten—fifteen. It was a quarter of five, and no response from Mr. Lannion. Then followed self-reproaches, bitter, intense. If the child suffered it would be my fault. My fault, because were I to stoop to a little flattery, a little coaxing, a half hint that I was not entirely unhappy at Ornith Farm, the boy would be forgiven. I put myself in Rodgers's place. Would a boy of his really fine nature wish wrong to be done that he might escape physical pain? But then, again, would it be wrong to act a lie in this case?

My brain whirled. I could not decide. I glanced at the clock. Ten minutes of five. I sprang to my feet and began again my restless walk, to and fro, to and fro. I was sick at heart, and at my wits' end. One minute of five—five o'clock.

I turned toward the door. The struggle was over. My pride must go to the wall. Then with lightning-like clearness, the words that I had written flashed suddenly across my mind—and with a new meaning. I had known that they carried two, but I now realized that the short sentence was capable of a third interpretation. If Mr. Lannion had so understood it, I had already stooped—and in vain!

Delcie, rising hastily, ran forward, her hands outstretched. "Lawdy me!" she exclaimed, forgetting elegance of speech in her alarm, "I'm fearful you's goin' to faint, you look so pale."

"Open the door, please," came a cheerful, childish treble from the hall. "I can't, my hands are so full."

I sank down upon the nearest chair and made a desperate effort not to burst out crying. For the gay voice was Rodgers's. Delcie hastened to obey his summons, and he entered, carrying, with great care, a cup of hot broth.

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"Uncle Rollis says you're to sip it slowly, for the starving ought to begin eating by degrees." Roddy placed the cup upon the window sill, and sighed in relief over the successful termination of his career as a waiter. "And Uncle Rollis says that he's had nothing to eat since breakfast, and will you please come to the library and make him a cup of tea? He says that he thinks he deserves more than one lump of sugar, but he'll leave that to you. Say," continued Mr. Lannion's messenger, beginning to converse on his own account now that his *devoir* was accomplished, "there are cherries in the library!" He gave a great skip. "Cherries! Beauties! I'm to have some! If you blow that soup it'll cool faster. Not that you're to hurry; Uncle Rollis said not; but when you've drunk it we can go down."

I did hurry, being unable to resist his appealing eyes. But when we reached the top of the staircase he held me back for a moment, and looking up at me said, in half-stifled tones: "You went hungry for me. Uncle Rollis said so. And I won't forget it—you may bet your life I won't! And you're just like Grace Darling, after all."

I patted his shoulder gently. I was both touched and pleased. "Thank you, Roddy," I said gratefully. "But I'm not a bit like your Grace Darling, rowing through raging billows to save lives. She was really grand."

"You've saved me a flogging," insisted Roddy, "and I won't forget it. And I'll promise *you* not to play with the dogs again."



## XIV

By the middle of that month, July, I had won for myself a certain freedom. The doubting, suspicious glances from ever-watching eyes had ceased. Although never left unguarded, I was treated by all as though my strange delusions were forgotten. It was evidently believed that my sanity was almost re-established. I needed care, constant care, but I had nearly recovered from the unfortunate attack of nervous prostration resulting from Mrs. Darling's sudden death. I had won this belief by the daily, nay, hourly, exercise of self-control. Since the first days of my coming to Ornith Farm when I had made wild appeals to Dr. Despard for help—striving, even frantically, to convince him of my identity—I had been passive, giving way to no passionate outbreak of any kind. This had been hard, very hard. But because of my early training, I was able to remain thus inactive—to bide my time.

It was Sunday afternoon. Mr. Lannion, Dr. Despard, Mr. King, and I were upon the veranda. Mrs. Despard was upstairs, napping. Roddy was not present. I thought I would see how far I might venture to extend my walks abroad, and I was just about to speak when Mr. Lannion rose.

"It's delightful here," he said, his eyes upon me, "but business is business, and I must attend to mine. No, Luther," as Dr. Despard made a motion as if to accompany him, "I can finish alone. You stay here—with the young people." And including Mr. King and me in a wave of the hand, he went indoors.

"Young?" said Mr. King, removing his hat and

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passing a hand across his bald head. "Dear me! what did he say that for? I thought"—he glanced reproachfully toward the door as if he still saw Mr. Lannion—"I thought that it must have been a dream—this shining, slippery poll! I thought I had but dreamed that I was a bald-headed patriarch! I expected to grasp a plentiful crop of curls—like Miss Darling's. It was mean of Rollis to start me off." Dr. Despard smiled. "I, too, like Rollis," Mr. King went on, "have a strong partiality for"—he paused and threw a handkerchief over his head as if preparing for a nap—"for—hope. But I don't indulge in such desperate grabs at hope, as a general thing." Dr. Despard turned his bright dark eyes questioningly upon the speaker, but only the lower portion of Mr. King's India-rubber-like face was visible. The big handkerchief concealed his eyes. "I don't expect to be young and fair again, I don't," he murmured drowsily, "not unless some rash individual, like R. Lannion, Esquire, starts me off."

Dr. Despard now gave me his full attention, Mr. King being veiled from over-curious scrutiny. I raised my eyebrows and smiled.

"Isn't he funny?" I said, nodding toward Mr. King. "I love nonsense, don't you? I wish he wouldn't go to sleep. Please don't go to sleep, Mr. King."

"Why not?" he demanded. His voice seemed to come from a great distance.

Again I glanced at Dr. Despard and smiled. He readjusted himself comfortably in his chair. Did I imagine it or was there an expression of relief upon his white mask-like face?

"You promised to take me to the woods some time, Mr. King," I said. "Are you too sleepy and is it too hot for us to go there now? And you will come, too, Dr. Despard?" I turned quickly to the doctor.

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Mr. King swept off his handkerchief and got up. Bringing his heels together with a click, he made me a neat bow and recited impressively, hand on heart:

"There was an Old Person of Cadiz, who was always polite to all ladies;

But in handing his daughter, he fell into the water, which drowned that Old Person of Cadiz."

But since there's no water in the woods, and I'm born to be hanged, I think we may venture, Miss Darling."

"And I am not your daughter," I added, smiling, and begged him to wait while I fetched a sunshade.

"I'm afraid I must veto your plan, Miss Darling," said Dr. Despard. He did not look at me as he spoke. "Solomon Jasper is not on hand—this is Sunday, you know. And I doubt if I can get as far as the woods to-day."

"We need a chaperon, it would seem," remarked Mr. King, in airy surprise to the distant woodland. "I must be young, after all!" And again, with an appearance of great slyness, he furtively felt his head.

"Young and giddy," said the doctor lightly. "Some people never grow up, Tom."

"We might go to the home field," I suggested, concealing with recently learned skill—the skill of a prisoner—my disappointment. "That is not very far away, and the walk is shady. You can go as far as the home field, I trust, Dr. Despard?"

"Oh, yes," was the slow and unwilling reply, "if you really want to walk, Miss Darling. It is so comfortable here."

"How kind of you!" I said gayly, ignoring his last words. "And Mr. King will fill his pockets with lumps of sugar for me and carry a camp chair for you. Mr. King is always good to people."

This small compliment had the odd effect of dé-

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pressing Mr. King, and although he did at once what I suggested, he walked to the meadow in a gloomy frame of mind. Indeed, so distrait was he that twice on the way thither he planted the camp chair in an inviting bit of shade and stood still.

"You forget that I'm going too, Tommy," the doctor said good-humoredly the second time. "Not but what I know that two's company!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. King apologetically; "I beg your pardon, Lu. The truth is I wasn't thinking of what I was doing."

"Of what were you thinking, then?" asked the doctor. He spoke sharply.

"Of the past," was the brief retort. "Just as you do sometimes." And we none of us spoke again until the pasture ground was reached.

Abatos and Nonios, the two black carriage horses, had been turned out to graze. Cooper was away, enjoying his Sunday afternoon outing. Nonios trotted whinnying across the field to welcome me, well aware of the treat in store for him. He was a handsome, powerful creature, and very intelligent.

"Nonie's awful smart," Cooper would say, "an' he takes things by and large. He don't never get over-excited, Nonie don't, but he walks away with the bun every time. Yes, sir, yes-yes, he takes things by and large."

That he took sugar by and large was evident. He crunched the lumps dealt out to him with a composed enjoyment, very different from the nervous greed of Abatos, his companion.

"Abbie's got enough go," was Cooper's verdict, "but his head's as slow as midnight. Anythin' unusual s'prises him to a standstill, unless Nonie's along to take the lead."

"Rollis is clever at a horse deal," said Dr. Despard, as he leaned against the fence at my side.

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"Nonios is as good under the saddle as in harness. He is both sweet-tempered and swift, Rollis tells me."

"Horse-dealing and card-playing are twins," observed Mr. King meditatively. "Is that a proverb, Dotty? Or have I evolved the deep thought from my inner consciousness?"

The doctor laughed, and, taking the camp chair, retired into the shade of a neighboring tree. He was just out of ear-shot if one spoke in low tones.

"If you're lucky in a horse-deal," murmured Mr. King, looking straight ahead, so that the doctor, who was seated behind us, might not know that he was speaking, "does that mean that in a deal of hearts you're—not?"

"Honesty is the best policy in both," I said. "My knowledge only goes that far."

Mr. King was silent for a moment. Nonios ate, with calm satisfaction, the last lump of sugar.

"This is a day," remarked my companion abruptly, but softly, "when I loathe all men, myself worst of all. It would be a good thing if we were all dead—every man Jack of us! And a fresh start made."

"Then, if that is the way you feel, I may amuse myself without dread of well-meant interference," I said. "I am Hope Carmichael, Mr. King. The newspapers have probably told of my riding feats. I will prove that I—am I, if you will play fair and give me the chance."

His broad baby face went white. "I can't," he whispered hoarsely. "If it's true, you'd be over the fence in no time, and——"

"No," I interrupted hastily, while, in imitation of his caution, I kept my face partly turned from him and pretended to be absorbed in caressing Nonios. "No, I give you my word. Do you, in your turn, give me my chance to prove my identity—to the doctor as well as to you."

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"I'm damned if I won't!" was the terse answer.

Before the words had more than left his lips I had topped the fence and tossed myself upon Nonios. I heard Dr. Despard cry out in alarm, but I dared not glance toward him and Mr. King. It was all I could do to look out for myself.

Since my first visit to the stables I had become well acquainted with the characters of its equine inmates. And I would not have flung myself thus recklessly upon the well-shaped back of Nonios, if I had not been there before. Cooper, treating me as though I were still but a little girl, had several times, at my urgent desire, mounted me upon the big black horse when in his stall. While Solomon, lazily on guard at the stable door, had preferred his newspaper, or the view outward, to watching my childish whims.

It was his business to see that I did not escape from Ornith Farm. In the stable with Cooper I was safe. So Nonios and I had become fast friends, and it was upon this friendship and his cool head that I now depended. Nonios took things by and large—how would he take me?

My unexpected descent so astonished him that he plunged and, snorting, started on a flying gallop around the field. Had it not been for my circus training and still more because of my fondness for riding bareback in the meadows when I was a child, I must, most assuredly, have been thrown. But, kicking off my slippers as I went, I stuck on as best I might, clinging to Nonios's mane, and soothing the wise creature with my voice until his perilous racing gallop became the easy canter that held no danger. I well knew that in the start off I should be little noticed by Mr. King. He would have his hands full with Dr. Despard, and my manner of keeping my seat would not be seen. So I paid no heed to appearances, but returning to childish methods, es-

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caped the misfortune of sliding off. What I had most dreaded were the turns to be made at the corners of the field, but by the time I had successfully rounded the first Nonios understood that steadiness was desired. With the innate desire to do his best, possessed by every intelligent and well-broken horse, Nonios now showed that he had also the rare quality of feeling responsible for the safety of his rider.

I had circled the meadow but once when the sound of a whistle, blown three times, told me that Dr. Despard had not ventured so far from the house with me unarmed. I was assailed by a very great temptation. Why not leap the fence and make a dash for freedom? I had given my word, but should it hold a prisoner such as I? A girl's promise! Did Mr. King expect it would be kept?

Nonios was now ambling gently. I glanced toward Mr. King. In his arms he held Dr. Despard, and was, apparently, too much overcome by laughter to notice the doctor's anger. Mr. King shouted, he roared, he swayed his friend to and fro, deaf to his frantic complaints. Suddenly, as I stared, knowing this mirth to be assumed, Mr. King flung his head back and, while still laughing, shot one swift glance at me. And I could not tell if the look meant "go" or "stay." What to do I did not know, for my given word held me in spite of my wish to disregard it.

The misery of decision was spared me. Up the slope toward the field a tall man came running. Solomon Jasper, returning from his too few hours of absence from duty. The same moment, hatless and in his shirt sleeves, as if he had dropped his work at the doctor's shrill summons, Mr. Lannion appeared on the path leading downward from the house.

"Quick, Rolly!" shouted Mr. King, releasing the doctor to make a trumpet of his hands, "you're just

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in time. Miss Darling's showing us how to ride. It's grand!"

Mr. Lannion, paying no attention, ran past him, cleared the fence, and in another moment was beside me. His face was quite gray; beneath his thick mustache his white lips twitched nervously. He laid his hand upon Nonios's shoulder and, while keeping pace with him, called to the horse to stop. When Nonios obeyed, coming down gently from his easy canter, Mr. Lannion held up his arms to me.

"Come," he said.

I sat quiet, looking down at him. I knew that my face was as colorless as his. At last I spoke.

"I will ride to where Dr. Despard is," I said slowly. "You may lead Nonios by the mane, if you wish."

"No," he said curtly, "you will dismount here. I will lift you down."

It had cost me much to speak. I was in a painful state of excitement. The swiftness with which the barriers against escape had been swung into place terrified me. And although I sat erect upon the back of the big black horse and smiled down serenely at the man beside me (my manner the ghost of that belonging to past days in the ring), I was shaken by dread.

"Come!" repeated Mr. Lannion, but his voice was less harsh. Then he caught sight of my slipperless feet, only half hidden by my fluttering muslins. "Where are your shoes?" he demanded. "What——"

"Wait not to find thy slippers,"

quoted a gay voice, and Mr. King joined us. Curiously enough he, too, was oddly pale, although he was smiling broadly and appeared to be in capital spirits. And he was as breathless as though he had been running, which was not the case.



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"I've sent Jasper for saddle and bridle," he said, his eyes roving everywhere save toward Mr. Lannion or me. "I thought since it scares you and Dotty to see Miss Darling ride bareback, she might as well be properly fitted out."

"She will return to the house," said Mr. Lannion briefly. "Come, Aimée!"

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mr. King, in perfectly expressionless tones. "Walk—in stockings?"

"She shall be carried," was the stern answer. "The usual method employed with wilful children."

"And with those temporarily—insane," I added, anger banishing fear.

"I want to see her ride!" complained Mr. King, as though speaking to himself. "I shall yet. Hope on, hope," he paused an instant, "*Hope—ever!*"

As he finished his slow sentence I saw Dr. Despard approaching. He had gone to the gate and thus effected an easy entrance. And as Mr. Lannion evidently did not like to go to the length of lifting me by force from my high position, I was still upon Nonios when the doctor arrived.

"Dr. Despard," I said, the moment he was within ear-shot—and my heart began to beat so violently that I lacked breath as greatly as had Mr. King—"Dr. Despard, I want to ride around the meadow. Mr. Lannion says 'no.' What do you say?"

The doctor looked the worse for his struggle with the volatile Mr. King. His usually white cheeks boasted each a bright pink spot. It was as if he had had recourse to rouge.

"I say no, too," he replied coldly. "You are already over-excited."

This was the touch too much. Figuratively speaking, I took the bit in my teeth and, as in old days with my dear Lady Disdain, "went wild."

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"I shall be more so if I am thwarted," I said quickly, and there was the tremor of suppressed tears in my voice. "You call me mad. So be it. But in that case why cross the harmless whims of a mad person?"

"This is not a harmless whim," the doctor began hurriedly, while the unwonted color in his cheeks went and came. I interrupted him.

"What!" I exclaimed, "you seek to reason with a mad girl? I am flattered, Dr. Despard." I made a little salutation with my hand in lieu of a whip. "But I should think that it would be well to humor the insane—when possible. Ah! here is Solomon, with saddle and bridle. I am to have my way?"

Solomon, who had fancied that Mr. King was giving the order for Mr. Lannion, now caught Abatos (whose curiosity had brought him within easy reach) and saddled him with a man's saddle. And I saw that a second bridle hung over Solomon's arm, and that he held two whips.

"What does this mean?" demanded Mr. Lannion sharply. When Solomon explained that he had thought Mr. Lannion wished to accompany me, and that he, Jasper, considered it wiser for me to have at least reins to depend upon, so had ventured to bring the second bridle, I got my answer. "You may take both horses to the stable," said Mr. Lannion severely, "and learn that it is I who give orders here—not Mr. King. Come, Aimée!" He again made as though he would lift me from the saddle.

Jasper had approached very near. Mr. King was holding Abatos as Solomon, innocently supposing that he was doing what his master wished, had already given me the whip and was just about to bit Nonios. At Mr. Lannion's harsh reproof he stopped instantly and stepped back from the horse's head.

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"Come, Aimée!" Mr. Lannion reiterated. "Enough of this nonsense." And he put his hands about my waist to jump me down.

I forgot my determination to be passive, submissive. I forgot the wise resolves made during long sleepless nights. An anger such as I had never before felt swept away every thought of expediency, every good resolution. I leaned forward, I raised my whip high, and lashed him across his head and shoulders. He started back, and Mr. King, dropping Abatos' bridle, came swiftly between us, just in time to catch me as I slid to the ground. The horse, affrighted, trotted snorting away across the field, and I, covering my face with my hands, burst into a passion of tears.

"Halloo!" shrilled a child's voice, "what are you all doing there?"

The men, as if by a common impulse, closed up, screening me from Roddy's curious gaze. He had almost reached us. I battled with the sobs which convulsed both body and soul.

"Say, you, Tom," the child continued as he drew near, "you got me a jolly big rating, do you know it?"

"How, Roddy?" It was Dr. Despard who spoke. Mr. King's usually fluent tongue was unaccountably still.

"Oh, Tom chose my Bible verse for me," said Roddy cheerfully, "and mother says he's not to do it again. She says if that's the kind of text he preached from when he was a minister, she doesn't wonder that he didn't draw."

Dr. Despard—was it to gain time for me?—asked Roddy to repeat the verse. "Let us hear what you have learned, my son," he said.

The child obeyed, his voice suddenly grave and earnest.

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"As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come."

In the profound silence that followed, my sobs were plainly heard; and Roddy, his thin face careworn, his blue eyes distended, had circled the men and was at my side before they could stop him.

"What's she crying for?" he asked, in low, eager tones. "Has she hurt herself?"

"Yes," said Mr. King quickly, with meaning, "she's lost her slippers—and hurt her feet. If you'll hunt the slippers up I'll give you a quarter."

"Where shall I look?" said the child; "I don't want money for it, Tom." Then, laying his small hand upon my shoulder, he said gently: "Don't you cry, Aimée. I'll find your slippers, and father will do the rest."

He started off on his search and soon had found what he sought. With painstaking care he put the slippers on for me, and I wondered that his child's hands had such gentle deftness.

"Can you walk, do you think?" he inquired anxiously. I had overcome my sobs, and even managed to smile a little as I nodded in acquiescence. "Lean on my shoulder," said my young protector affectionately. "I'm really very strong. And father will make your feet all right, won't you, father?"

Dr. Despard made no response. We returned to the house in silence.

## XV.

I slept very little that night. Over and over again I asked myself what impression had been made upon Mr. King, and if in him I had found a friend. If not, then by my wild outburst of surely righteous wrath I had lost the little previously gained. Wearied out at last I fell asleep toward dawn, and did not rise until late in the morning. I dreaded going downstairs and meeting Mr. Lannion and Dr. Despard. Especially the latter, whom I no longer believed an unskilful physician but Mr. Lannion's willing accomplice. But I felt I must see Mr. King. Perhaps, I said to myself—for I was very young and ignorant—perhaps he had already left Ornith Farm, and was sending news of my whereabouts to Max. This wild hope carried me quickly in search of him. I heard Mr. Lannion's voice in the hall above as I left my room. It floated down the staircase, the top of which he must have just gained.

"Despard believes it's the best outfit in the country; but we need you to——"

I held myself rigidly still, not wishing to be discovered. I heard no more, however, for the speaker, with his companions, passed into one of the upper rooms and closed the door. I had never visited the third story. It was "taboo." Mr. King had his quarters there, I knew, and Mr. Lannion and the doctor were often to be seen on their way thither. The servants slept in the basement.

I continued my way downstairs as far as the landing; from there I looked into the lower hall. Jasper

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sat beneath the fierce-beaked eagle reading a newspaper. He showed that he was aware of my presence by rising and standing at attention; he did not look up. When I asked who was downstairs he said laconically:

"No one, miss."

I did not wish to question him as to Mr. King's whereabouts. Aileen's door opened while I stood hesitating, not knowing what to do, and Mrs. Despard came out.

"Where are you going, dearie?" she asked as she caught sight of me. "Better come in and see Aileen and me for a little."

She rustled down to my side and laid a kind hand upon my shoulder. I knew from the anxious expression in her prominent, pale-blue eyes that she had been told that I was not so well. I could imagine that I heard the doctor saying, in tones of grave regret, that his "young patient" had had "rather a serious relapse." At the moment I hated him even more fiercely than I hated Mr. Lannion.

"There's not much view from these north windows," my companion continued, staring at the wide sweep of gravel below, the tall evergreens growing close on either side, and the path beyond leading to the hedged-in garden. "I love a spreading prospect myself. I must have a horryzon. And that," she went on reflectively, "is why I don't care for mountings. Just great lumps of dirt between the horryzon and me! And I notice that even folks who say they love mountings are always and forever shining up them, to see something else. It's real hot this morning, ain't it? Come, let's go sit with Aileen!"

It was very hot. Aileen looked flushed and feverish, I thought, as I kissed her good-morning. She, too, regarded me with troubled eyes. I smiled down

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upon her reassuringly and an odd, bewildered expression succeeded the anxious one.

"Where is Mr. King?" I asked, as I sat down beside her. "Has he gone away?"

"No, he hasn't," said Mrs. Despard irritably, "but I 'most wish he had. He sets Roddy up so. No, he's upstairs now; him and Loo and Rollis Lannion and two friends. Yes, they've come to stay"—in answer to my look of inquiry—"they're here often."

"What is the 'outfit'?" I asked.

"Outfit?" repeated Mrs. Despard.

"Yes," I said. "I heard Mr. Lannion say that Dr. Despard believed some 'outfit' to be the best in the country. He spoke as though they were on their way to see it."

"I don't know," she mused, curiosity plainly visible in every feature. Then, with a look of disgust, she exclaimed: "Probably nothing but some dull old books on something or other! When those men come here to stay, Rollis Lannion and Loo sit upstairs an' talk an' gabble till they're just tired out."

"I never hear them gabbling, Henrietta," said Aileen good-naturedly, "and you know you don't. Henrietta is not allowed upstairs," she explained, smiling. "Cousin Rollis likes to have his things up there left in Solomon's charge."

"Which I've no wish to go," said Mrs. Despard with embittered dignity; "it's knee-deep in dust, prob'ly! But if they don't talk, then, I ask, what do they do?" Aileen had no answer ready, and Mrs. Despard repeated solemnly, "I ask, what do they do? If they don't talk," she continued, "why does Loo Despard return from their society with his brains so momonuxed up that he can't scarcely hear what I'm sayin'? But they do talk, girls, and I'll tell you what about, which the doctor he told me. It's

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scientific *re-search*!" She stared at us each in turn. "Scientific *re-search*—that's what it is. And so long as they don't go to cutting up live animals in it, they're free to continue. Which I said the same to Rollis Lannion and Loo Despard, and I said it firm. 'If you cut up poor living creatures,' said I, 'to learn somethin' to cure women and children as you say so fine (which would a thousand times rather die than have poor dumb beasts suffer torture), then,' I said, 'if you do,' said I, 'I'll break the door down and learn you what sufferin' alive means.' Which I'd do it, too!"

There was silence for a moment. Aileen seemed preoccupied. I felt miserable and unlike conversation. "It can't be books, after all," Mrs. Despard burst out suddenly, staring solemnly at me. "Books ain't never called outfits."

"No, dear Henrietta," acquiesced Aileen patiently.

"Do you suppose he meant clothes?" asked Mrs. Despard. "But no"—without waiting for an answer—"Rollis Lannion don't care about clothes. I do wish I knew what he meant!"

"Why do you care, dear?" said Aileen soothingly. "It's probably nothing interesting."

"Why do I care?" repeated Mrs. Despard irritably. "If Malcolm Lucas was admirin' 'outfits' as being the handsomest in the country, wouldn't you care?"

"Then why not ask Dr. Despard?" I very naturally demanded. "He is the one who can tell you."

Mrs. Despard surveyed me with lofty but withal friendly pity. "When you're married," she explained condescendingly, "you'll understand. And I just guess," she continued, wagging her much be-frizzled head at me solemnly, "that you'll find it ain't always so easy to question your husband as you think! Which, of course, you'll have the advantage



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of bein' an old man's darling—not that Rollis Lannion is so old, not forty yet, but, as compared to you——”

I rose to my feet, I held up my hand. “Stop!” I said.

“For God's sake, Henrietta!” exclaimed poor Aileen.

“What have I done?” cried Mrs. Despard. She, too, rose, and stood staring at me, red-faced and scared. “I ain't said anything but what every one knows and says! A man is a sight easier before marriage than after. I ain't talkin' against Rollis Lannion in particular. And I'm not goin' back on my own husband. Men are all alike in their ways before and after marriage. It ain't Loo Despard or Rollis Lannion—it's just man!”

I laughed jarringly, forlornly, and sank down upon my chair. Aileen had become very pale. She watched me timidly, intense pity in her lovely eyes. At this painful juncture Roddy came briskly in. I think we were all very glad to see him.

“I'm the elevator boy,” he announced, surveying us with complacent friendliness. “Whoever goes up or downstairs must ring for me.”

“Where have you been?” his mother asked. She spoke crossly, evidently pleased to have some one upon whom to wreak her spleen. “And how many times have I told you not to bounce in here without knocking?”

“Never once!” was the indignant reply. “And Aileen says——”

“That is an untruth,” interrupted Mrs. Despard angrily; “I've told you fifty times if once——”

“No, you never!” insisted Rodgers doggedly.

“Rodgers Despard,” cried his mother in awful tones, “look me in the eye! Look me in the eye and dare——”

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"Oh, please, Henrietta!" implored Aileen from the bed. "Don't scold him! It's so hot, and I'm not feeling well, and——"

"There," stormed Mrs. Despard triumphantly, catching Roddy as he went through with the peculiar dance always evoked by her order to look her in the eye, "there, what did I tell you? It's made her ill, your bouncing in!"

"You let me be!" cried the boy, squirming out of her grasp like an eel. "You're mad about something, or you wouldn't be so cross. I'll tell you something"—he had gained the door and, sure of escape, grinned impishly at his irate mother—"that Tommy said, if you want?" Mrs. Despard stared but said nothing. "It was about you and Aimée," continued Roddy teasingly.

"You are not to go with Tom King, Rodgers Despard," commanded his mother. "What did he say?"

"He said——" began Rodgers, then stopped short.

"Well, go on," from Mrs. Despard eagerly.

"Guess I'd better not tell—'twas only something about Aimée's singing."

"She doesn't sing," was the quick response, "do you, Aimée?" turning to me.

"Yes, I sing," I said quietly.

Rodgers forgot his mother; he advanced into the room. "My!" he exclaimed, "do you really?" I bowed. "Will you sing for me—now?"

I looked at Aileen.

"Pray do," she said—with suppressed eagerness.

I turned to Mrs. Despard. "You do not object?"

I spoke very ceremoniously. How had she dared couple my name with Rollis Lannion's?

"I shall be delighted to hear you, I'm sure," she said, with pitying condescension, "if you care to try." And with the air of a world-renowned diva

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about to endure the false notes of a tyro, she seated herself in state to listen.

Upon my first coming to Ornith Farm I had had no heart for singing. I was too newly caged. And after, when I became desirous of winning the goodwill of my innocent companions, I had instinctively refrained from entering into what I felt sure would be considered a rivalry by Mrs. Despard. Her singing was not popular with the household. Were mine liked she might be jealous, and I so lose a friend. But I was out of sorts on that hot July morning, and too much absorbed in my wrongs to be able to judge those about me either coolly or kindly. I was indignant with Mrs. Despard, and quite careless as to what the result of my singing might be. I placed myself before the chimney-piece, directly opposite Aileen, where she lay, flushed and anxious, among her white draperies. And as I looked at her sad young face I forgot Mrs. Despard and the boy. I remembered only that this suffering girl could alone understand my feelings and, my eyes meeting hers, I sang:

*“Voi, che sapete, che cosa è l'amor,”*

But, as always, before I had finished the first verse, I forgot both self and audience, carried away by the mere joy of singing—by the rhythm of the music. And, thus launched, I swung from one song into another, following, unconsciously, the train of thought that each brought with it. Presently I was looking, not at the young invalid, but up at the figure of the Christ. Ah! He had known suffering—“A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” But now He was seated “on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

And very humbly, my heart in my voice, I sang “Angels, ever bright and fair—” Then, my eyes

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still upon that suffering face, I burst into the Benedictus:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people;  
And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us,”—

As with my whole soul and strength I chanted the last verse,

“That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us,”

I became aware that the door of the room was half open, and that there were people outside, in the hall, listening.

I went back to my chair beside Aileen, and Mr. Lannion entered with Dr. Despard, the latter closing the door behind him. An odd silence followed. Mrs. Despard, rigid and red-faced, sat with her lips tightly compressed as though fearing, were they to part, her tongue might run away with her civility. Roddy, wide-eyed and preoccupied, leaned against the wall, absorbed in that dream-world of childhood which some have never entered. Aileen, her big eyes moist with unshed tears, spoke first, and forgetting Mrs. Despard's feelings, burst into enthusiastic expressions of delight.

“Yes, very lovely,” Dr. Despard acquiesced politely, when her warm praise admitted of an interruption. “Miss Darling's voice is exquisite. I am sorry to have to put a stop to what gives us all so much pleasure”—he avoided looking at me as he spoke—“but I must beg Miss Darling not to tax her strength by singing at present. She is—as yet—very far from strong.”

I looked up and met Mr. Lannion's eyes. The expression in them stung me to speech.

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"I am not to ride," I said slowly, "and I am not to sing. What then, if I may ask, am I to do?"

"Come to the library," said Mr. Lannion, an odd inflection in his harsh voice, "and I will try to amuse you."

"I am not to ride," I repeated, paying no attention to his words, "and I am not to sing. Then the newspapers must have said much of the riding and singing of a certain Hope Carmichael! I——"

"Enough!" cried Mr. Lannion, interrupting me rudely. "I cannot permit you to speak in this way. Come, I will take you for a stroll. The out-door air may help to soothe your nerves," and he advanced toward me.

I was seated on the side of the room farthest from the door. To reach me he had to circle Aileen's bed. As he started the door opened noiselessly and Mr. King entered; at the same time Rodgers left his position—and his dreams—and placed himself directly in front of me.

"She doesn't want to go with you, Uncle Rollis," said the child; "she wants to stay here with us."

Mr. Lannion stopped short, staring down at the boy. I rose and laid my hands lightly on Roddy's well-knit shoulders.

"I am Mary Carmichael," I said clearly, "called—by my own people—Hope. I am not to ride or sing lest——"

"Hush!" commanded Mr. Lannion sternly. He took a step forward and put out his hand as though to place it upon my lips.

A very passion of fury seemed to shake the boy. "Don't you touch her," he cried in his shrill treble, "for I won't stand it! You let me off my licking the other day—well, give it to me now, and let her alone!"

In the silence that followed Mr. King's voice was

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heard. He spoke softly; it was as though he but thought aloud. "They fought from heaven," he murmured, "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Mr. Lannion laughed harshly. "You are mistaken, Rodgers," he said. "It is I that am punished always, never Aimée. She lashes me with her riding-whip, and I, I bend my head—and kiss the rod."

"Well, anyway," persisted Roddy, bewildered but determined, "you let her alone."

"And we will change the subject," I cried, with mocking lightness of tone. "Dr. Despard shall tell what this 'outfit' is that he considers the best in the country."

Another silence—broken, this time, by Mrs. Despard.

"Yes, you may look at each other," she said triumphantly, "but you won't catch us women napping, I guess! Not that *I* care about your stupid secrets, which I know no meaning for outfits but clothes, which I always supposed men pretended to scorn. And as for that poor child"—with a pitying glance at me—"which you won't let exercise anything (though any doctor which is willing to live in the world"—a withering glance at Dr. Despard—"knows ridin' and singin' is first-class exercise even for delicate girls), why, all I can say is if that's the way some folks"—a sidelong motion of the eyelid toward Mr. Lannion—"think they'll please, it's a mighty queer way, to my notions."

"I think I will go to my room," I said wearily, "if that is permitted——"

"Aimée!" cried Mr. Lannion reproachfully, pleadingly.

I patted the boy's cheek. "Brave Roddy!" I whispered, leaning over him. Then, bowing slightly to the others, I went away.

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It was a very great disappointment to me that neither Aileen nor Mrs. Despard had appeared startled, or even impressed, by my announcement of my identity. But upon reflection I realized that I had simply said what they had been expecting me to say every day since my arrival at Ornith Farm.

Delcie was seated by the window sewing when I entered my room. She looked up at me anxiously.

"My honey-love seems real peaked and down to-day," she said, putting aside her work the better to survey me. "Won't she promenade in the garden a little? I don't like to see those sweet cheeks so pale."

For answer I flung myself face downward upon the bed and gave way to tears of despair. I felt unable to cope with my fate. Every one believed Mr. Lannion, and thought me mad. I doubted if Mr. King had made any effort to help me. He was still at Ornith Farm. And the longer I remained away from home the deeper must become the certainty that I was drowned—sucked under by my hereditary enemy, the sea. I moaned dully. My courage had given way.

"Don't, for God's sake, my own little lady, my sweet honey-love!" murmured Delcie. She lifted me in her arms, cradling me against her tender heart.

"I wish that I were dead, Delcie," I sobbed, "dead, and with my mother!"

"I'll call the doctor," said Delcie in alarm, and she tried to lay me down among my pillows.

I clung to her, I would not let her go.

"No, no," I cried piteously; "I want only you! Dr. Despard is wicked, wicked! He is doing me a wrong."

"Mr. Lannion, then?" suggested poor Delcie, frightened. "I'll bring him."

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"I hate him!" I whispered fiercely.

"Dear, dear," remonstrated Delcie, "and he so fond of you! Don't you go and tell him so, my honey-love," she advised in low tones. "Hate him all you want to me, but, when in his company, 'low him to surmise pleasantnesses. He's a nobly natured gentleman, still—well—" She ceased speaking, and after a moment's silence whispered hurriedly: "Will my sweet little lady try to control her nervousnesses when with—*him*?" She hesitated, then placing her lips close against my ear she rather breathed than whispered, "Lawsy me, child, do be careful—'ware them wolfish eyes!" And without waiting for comment or answer, she began to sing, trying to lull me to sleep.

There came the gentlest of taps at the door, the merest apology for a knock, and Dr. Despard stole in. At the first sound of his coming I had buried my flushed face on Delcie's shoulder, and she did not cease her crooning. After a moment she sang to me that we were again alone.

I remained in my room all day, and no one again ventured near me.



## XVI

Because of my keeping my room, poor Delcie, too, was a prisoner. She was glad when, at nine o'clock, I suggested going to bed. So soon as I was settled for the night, she prepared her own couch—she slept on the lounge in my room—and it was not long before her peaceful breathing told me that she, at least, had forgotten care.

The night was as hot as the day had been. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves of the twin maples. Our windows were open, the blinds flung wide, yet the thin curtains did not move. I tossed restlessly from side to side; I could not sleep. From the veranda below came the subdued sound of voices, the scent of tobacco. By and by—for my door stood ajar—I heard Mrs. Despard rustling up the staircase. The clock in the lower hall chimed the hour—eleven o'clock. I left my bed and went to the window. The moon hung low in the western heavens. In another hour it would disappear. I thought—with a sickening pang of the heart—of a June evening when the moon swung low, and I had taken the false step of my life.

I felt feverishly restless. The four walls of the room, with the shadowy sevens of the frieze, seemed closing in upon me. I would go out and walk in the garden, under the open sky. If Delcie waked she might go with me; if not, let Jasper follow at my heels. I dressed quickly, resuming the filmy muslin I had worn all day. I put on my belt with its handsome diamond buckle, and slipped into place the diamond incrustated watch. Mr. Lannion had not been

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niggardly; the jewels were large and fine. He had even gone so far as to provide expensive silver buckles for my slippers. And the garden had been beautified according to my suggestions. The fountain played, and vases filled with flowering plants marked the entrance to each path.

I left the room, pausing just a moment to see if Delcie still slept. Her comely dark face stood out against the snowy pillow. She did not move. The upper hall was empty. The windows on the staircase landing stood wide. The world outside looked very lovely, illuminated by the low-swung moon. There was a certain mystery in the absence of all breeze. The trees and the bushes were very silent; it was as if they were listening for the return of their play-fellow.

I looked over the balusters. Solomon Jasper—as in the morning—was seated beneath the great eagle. But this time he was asleep. Not caring if he waked or not, I went on downstairs and, since I did not care, no board gave warning by creaking beneath my footfall, nor did my muslins, rustling gently, betray me to my guard. The door was open. I stepped out into the night. Then, with a sudden fierce rush of excitement, I realized that the moment had come at last. This was my chance to escape!

I descended the steps cautiously and entered the shade of the Norway spruce trees that stood—tall and sombre—on the edge of the gravelled sweep before the house. As I crossed to them, each pebble seemed to clash against its neighbor; for now that I strove to move noiselessly, everything that I touched gave forth a warning sound. From beneath the broad-spread branches of the spruces I could see the length of the avenue and the closed gate. Ignorant of the lie of the land beyond the trimmed lawns, I felt I had best follow the beaten track and, since boldness

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had brought me thus far, go on by avenue and highway to the nearest dwelling. I was sure that any unbiassed person would listen to my story and give me help.

Keeping upon the grass, flitting swiftly across the moonlit spaces between the trees, I had accomplished half the journey to the gate, when a dark object detached itself from a clump of bushes just beyond me and moved into the open. It was Osiris, the larger of the Great Danes. I had forgotten the dogs.

Osiris stretched himself and opened his jaws wide, yawning lazily. Then he lay down on the grass and began to roll luxuriously from side to side. His striped coat showed plainly in the moonlight—he looked very like a tiger. I glanced about me anxiously. Where was Hermes? Lurking close at hand, doubtless. The two ran together. Osiris was between me and the gateway. I did not go forward; I was afraid. I had been accustomed all my life to the companionship of dogs, but Malvina had taught me that some were untrustworthy; and Mr. Lannion's watchdogs were trained to fierceness.

I retraced my steps for a few yards and, taking advantage of a bridge of shade, crossed the avenue and crept behind a group of shrubs. If Hermes were near Osiris, the breadth of the driveway now separated me from both dogs, and I might steal to the gate unseen. I held my breath, listening. To my despair, Osiris left the grass for the road. He stood still in the middle of the avenue, his nose pointing toward the house. Then, just beyond me, a black shadow lifted itself. Hermes!

With painful care I drew off my slippers and crawled backward inch by inch. And slowly the black shadow followed. As if aware of his mate's

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movements Osiris lounged along the avenue, keeping pace with us. The garden was now my only refuge. I neared it slowly, slowly, but at last its gate was close at hand. Could I but open it unheard I might hope to escape, not only from the dogs, but, later, from Ornith Farm as well.

My fingers trembled as I lifted the latch. What if it fell and betrayed me? But I accomplished an entrance, and, closing the gate softly, stole on into the heavy shade of the path. Then I stood still—waiting. The gate was not too high for the big dogs. They could leap it if they chose.

There came a quick rustle through the bushes, an eager snuffing beneath the gate. I turned and fled along the path. My aim was to reach the garden's centre and set the fountain playing before the dogs came up with me. I knew that to run from them would be fatal—it would but excite them to the chase. I hoped that the plashing fountain might serve as a temporary barrier; the sudden lift of its waters bringing the dogs to a standstill, quieting their pursuing rush—if only for a moment. The check might mean much to me.

Arrived at my goal I knelt and, dropping my slippers, which I still carried, hastily turned on the water. As I did so I heard the dogs, one following the other, plunge heavily over the gate, and before I could circle the basin, they had dashed into the open space. Here they halted abruptly, crouched, and—with low growls stared at me. Their eyeballs gleamed in the waning moonlight. I was sick with terror. Would they tear me, these wild beasts? How long must I stand waiting for them to spring?

Then, scarce knowing that I did so, I began to sing. No hymn nor prayer for safety rose to my lips, but the words of the old ballad, the ballad of Mary Hamilton:

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"When I was a babe, and a very little babe,  
And stood at my mither's knee,  
Nay witch nor warlock did unfauld  
The death I was to dree."

The huge Osiris settled himself quietly down upon the gravel, and dropping his great head between his paws, gazed intently up at me. But for his tail that twitched back and forth, like a restless snake, he might have been a dog of stone.

"O a' ye mariners, far and near,  
That sail ayont the sea,  
Let na my father and mither ken  
The death I am to dee."

As the minor cadences of the wild melody swung upward, upward, filling the quiet world about us, Hermes seated himself upon his haunches, lifted his dark nose skyward, and accompanied my singing with long-drawn howls of sympathy. I sank down upon the grass, half laughing half sobbing, in the intensity of my relief, and Hermes, coming close to me, put out a long pink tongue and gently swabbed my cheek.

At the same moment Osiris spied one of my slippers. Its silver buckle glittered gayly. He pounced upon it, tossed it aloft, then, giving way to an outburst of wild spirits that showed how recently he had outgrown puppyhood, he stiffened his long tail, laid back his sharp ears, and galloped frantically around and around the circle of turf and fountain. Hermes—Trismegistus—sat down beside me and viewed his companion's youthful exuberance of spirits with benign tolerance, while I, infected by the young dog's jollity, clapped my hands and encouraged him in his mad race.

In the sudden revulsion of feeling, I was almost

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as wild and gay as he. I flung the slipper for him. He seized it and rushed away through the vegetable beds, disappearing only to reappear, panting and breathless, to drop his mangled toy before me and beg me to throw it again. At last he came back without the slipper; he had lost what was left of it in some dark corner of the garden. He stood before me and, with short gruff barks, demanded its mate for prey. I laughed aloud, delighted by his friendly impertinence. His eyeballs shone like jewels in his excitement; he bounced about on the gravel, now wagging his tail, now holding it rigid; then made playful but elephantine jumps toward me, threatening to seize the slipper from my uplifted hand. Three times I pretended to toss the slipper from me; to right, to left. Osiris, deceived, dashed in search of it, then returned and scolded over my duplicity.

"Then take it, foolish fellow!" I cried, and I flung it straight before me into the path leading from the gate.

Osiris bounded after it, then crouched suddenly. A voice came from the darkness beyond: "Well thrown!" and Mr. Lannion emerged from beneath the trees.

The moon had set, but the stars, glowing with a splendid radiance, illuminated the open spaces bravely. I saw that Mr. Lannion held my slipper in his hand. He advanced close in front of me, then knelt to replace the dog's toy. But I drew back as far as possible—till the edge of the fountain was close behind me, and the spray from its sheaf of high-tossed water touched, now and again, my hair.

"No," I said, "give the slipper to me." I held out my hand.

He rose slowly. "You will not put it on?" he asked.

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"One slipper?" I said carelessly. "Why, no, of course not. I should hobble absurdly in only one."

"Where is the other?" he demanded.

"Among your cabbages, I fancy," I answered lightly. "Did you hear Hermes singing, M. Lannion? Is that why you are here?"

"I came to be with you," he said quietly. "Won't you sit on the bench for a little? It is a beautiful night." He glanced up at the stars.

"How did you know that I was here?" I asked, not responding to his invitation, but, turning from him, holding out a hand to catch the soft spray as it fell.

"I saw you come out," he said.

I began to hum a tune, softly, very softly, keeping time to the splash, splash of the fountain. The wholesome game with the young dog had steadied my shaken nerves. Finding that I had nothing to say, Mr. Lannion spoke again.

"Did you imagine yourself unseen?" he asked. I shrugged my shoulders carelessly, not ceasing my crooning to the water's flow. "I was upon the veranda when you left the house," he said.

I broke off my thread of song. I turned upon him. "You knew the dogs were loose?" I asked.

"Yes," he said.

"You knew that they were harmless?" I spoke sharply.

"Harmless to you? Yes."

I thought a moment. "But you hoped," I said slowly, "that I might meet them and be badly frightened?"

"Not badly," he said composedly. "A little frightened, perhaps."

I laughed softly, contemptuously. "What a coward you are!" I said, and turning again to the fountain I recommenced my low song.

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"A coward!" exclaimed Mr. Lannion. "I don't know what you mean." I continued my singing, ignoring him and his words. "I was, as I said," he went on, finding that I would not speak, "on the veranda when you came downstairs. I suspected your intention. I knew you thought it was too early for the dogs to have been unleashed. I repeat that, aware that they would not hurt you, I hoped they might frighten you back into your senses——"

"My senses?" I interrupted. I gave him my entire attention now.

"Yes," he said. "It is time that you realized your position. It is time you should learn that, although Jasper sleeps on duty, and the dogs fail in theirs, you may never hope to escape me. You are mine. You are to remain with me—always."

I was silent. The big bright stars glowed and burned far above us. The mystery, the beauty of the summer night wrapped the garden close, close as in a shadowy mantle. The flowers in the vases exhaled their fragrance. The silvery sound of the plashing fountain filled the air. Mr. Lannion laid his hand upon my arm.

"Aimée," he murmured caressingly, "Aimée, my darling, I love you. Won't you try to give me a little affection in return?"

I drew aside so quickly that I shook off the hated touch. I leaned down and stroked the big dark head of the dog beside me.

"Hermes sings better than I, Mr. Lannion," I said, in tones of polite conversation; "I think he deserves decoration." Unpinning my belt I tied it in the dog's collar. "Silver and diamonds will just suit his dusky beauty. Give me my slipper, please." Mr. Lannion obeyed. I could not see his expression, but I knew that he was watching me closely. "And now," I continued, "I want a switch."



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"What for?" he demanded.

I did not answer. He went to a neighboring tree, broke off what I desired, and gave it to me.

"Please stop the fountain, Mr. Lannion." He turned off the water. "Hermes," I said confidentially, "I am going to sail a boat, and you may look on if you wish."

But Hermes did not wish. His decoration annoyed him. In his effort to rid himself of it, he rolled over on his back. I laughed. Mr. Lannion, going to the dog's assistance, detached belt and buckle and thrust them into his pocket. I meanwhile was busy lading my vessel. This was my remaining slipper, into which I dropped my watch. As I launched my curious craft on the now quiet waters of the basin, Mr. Lannion remonstrated.

"If it upsets your watch will be ruined," he said.

"There are plenty of watches besides this one," I said coolly. "You can buy another," and I gave the slipper an encouraging poke with my switch. It careened badly, and almost went over.

"Are you crazy?" cried Mr. Lannion.

"According to you and Dr. Despard—yes," I said, and I beat the water behind my boat into a foam.

Mr. Lannion, kneeling quickly beside me, caught me about the waist before I suspected his intention.

"You need a strait-jacket," he said, "and punishment," and to my terror his stern face came close to mine.

I struggled. The switch, catching in the slipper, upset it. The watch, its brilliants flashing, sank to the bottom of the basin. At the same moment a sharp sound cut through the stillness. Some one was striking a match close at hand.

"Those whom the gods would destroy," complained a plaintive voice, Mr. King's voice, "they first make

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mad. I wanted to smoke in the garden. I brought only one match—and it has failed me!”

Mr. Lannion rose swiftly.

“Say, Lannie,” continued Mr. King, “are you there?”

“Yes,” was the gruff response. And Mr. Lannion, taking off his coat, began to roll up his shirt sleeves.

“Now what on earth are you up to?” exclaimed Mr. King, coming forward. “Have you gone clean off your head, Rollis? Of course we all know you’re half-way there. What the deuce are you after, anyway?”

“My wits,” replied Mr. Lannion sharply, “and the child’s watch.” Lying down prone at the basin’s edge, he began to fish for the lost treasure.

“Sir Isaac Walton, the complete angler!” commented Mr. King, peering through the twilight. “What is yon dusky object I see floating there?”

“Aimée’s slipper,” said the fisherman gloomily. “Just run back to the house and get her another pair, Tom, will you?”

“A pair?” demanded Mr. King lazily. “Why burden myself with two, when one is all that is needed?”

I laughed.

“She has allowed the dog to make mince-meat of the other,” said Mr. Lannion crossly, still groping for the watch.

“Dear me!” murmured Mr. King, “dear me! What a bad little girl it is! Oh, you have it, have you?” as Mr. Lannion suddenly withdrew his dripping arms and got up.

“Yes,” was the curt response, “and it has stopped. I knew it would.”

“That’s awfully nice,” said Mr. King with prompt cheerfulness, “and I congratulate you, Lannie. It’s grand to have one’s prophecies turn out A1, even if

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"I did not pounce," growled Mr. Lannion. He was upon his knees putting on my slippers, and seemed to be in a very bad humor.

"Perhaps, now that you've effected the pouncing act to your entire satisfaction," Mr. King continued, still speaking in an aggrieved tone, "you'll give me a light. I want to smoke, and Miss Darling permits."

"Use your own matches," said Mr. Lannion rudely, "you have a boxful in your pocket."

"Rollis!" exclaimed Mr. King, in pained surprise, "and you heard me only a few minutes ago cursing my own forgetfulness in the matter of matches. As well as I can recollect I spoke aloud in my irritation. I even remember my words. I said——"

"I heard you," was the curt comment. "You were talking for effect—as usual."

"For effect—what effect?" asked Mr. King blandly. So blandly, indeed, that I felt an odd thrill of excitement. My quiet Cousin Sam, nicknamed the Cool, had been wont to speak in just such tones before entering into fierce combat.

Mr. Lannion had risen to his feet, having accomplished his task. He stood directly in front of me. His tall, powerful figure seemed to dominate the open space of grass and fountain, bringing a new shadow to kill the light of the stars. Mr. King got up slowly. It was as if he, too, felt overpowered, and resisted the unpleasant sensation.

"You always talk for effect," said Mr. Lannion sneeringly; "it's the trick of your trade." He laughed disagreeably.

"You damned scoundrel!" said Mr. King softly. "It's because our trade is the same that you dare speak like this——"

"There, that's enough!" cried Mr. Lannion roughly, imperiously; "you forget the presence of

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Miss Darling. Come home, Aimée!" He held out his hand to me.

"Home!" exclaimed Mr. King—his voice still pitched in a soft, low key—"home! Why, the only reason I don't try to drown you now in that fountain is because the mob will lynch you later, on account of——"

"Yes, yes, we all know you're an immersionist," Mr. Lannion interrupted, "but you needn't try your hand on me, Tom. We can't fight, much as you'd like to." He laid his hand upon Mr. King's shoulder. "We're not the first pair of friends who have been set at loggerheads by a woman—such a little woman, too! See, I'm sorry for what I said, Tom. I beg your pardon."

In spite of the hearty ring of friendliness in his voice, I believed that he was not sorry, that he was only talking Mr. King over. But the latter shook hands with him warmly.

"I'll never forget the day we met, Lannion," he said heartily, "nor what you did for me then—never."

"But you are forgetting the primrose, Mr. King," I said gently, "and your promise to show it to me."

"No, indeed," was the answer, "I have not forgotten anything. A retentive memory is one of my minor miseries. You won't mind coming along, will you, Rollis?" turning to his friend. "It's just down this side path, and it won't keep her up five minutes more."

"I'll stay here," said Mr. Lannion in genial tones, "and smoke my pipe. Run along with Tom, child, and see his primrose." He sat down on the bench, then drawing a box from his pocket, held it out to me. "I brought these for you, Aimée; I thought you might feel faint." I hesitated, not offering to take it from him. "Only chocolates," he said, with an

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odd laugh; "you may eat fearlessly. You forget that pomegranates do not grow in my garden."

"Pomegranates?" said Mr. King inquiringly, as I accepted the box. "Oh, yes, I remember:

"—the hunger and thirst of the heart,  
The frenzy and fire of the brain,  
That grasps at the fruitage forbidden;  
The golden pomegranates——"

and so on! If you're ready, Miss—Aimée, the primrose waits."

Mr. Lannion rose abruptly. "I have changed my mind," he said; "I am coming, too."

Mr. King, making no comment, led the way down the side path nearest us. As I followed I began to eat the bonbons. I was faint. I hoped that I might not break down and cry. I felt so terribly alone. My reckless courage of the early night had fled. I had only one desire: to hurry back into my own room, to be under the wing of my patient maid once more. But I was anxious that Mr. Lannion should not suspect my terrors. So I munched the chocolates, and hoped for sufficient strength to fight down the hysterical choke in my throat.

"Hush!" cautioned Mr. King, coming to a standstill. "There is a big white moth fluttering toward it. See!"

I moved noiselessly to his side.

Just beyond us, under the starlight, I saw a stately plant whose flowers—great bell-shaped globes of palest gold—attracted the snowy moth as surely as though they had been not fairy lamps but real ones. Fascinated, enraptured, I forgot myself in my childish delight over this candelabra of blossoms till Mr. Lannion's harsh voice broke the spell.

"Despard would like that moth to add to his collection," he said. "I forget its name, but it is a

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rare one. How big it is! It's a pity he's not here. I might catch it for him."

"No," I said imperiously. "No—I wish you would go back to the bench and not spoil my pleasure, Mr. Lannion." I ended with a half sob.

"What have I done?" he asked anxiously, stooping over me.

"I saw a toad kill a moth like that once," Mr. King observed in tones purely conversational. "It was a sickening sight."

"Why did you let it?" I demanded.

"Couldn't help myself," he drawled composedly. "It was in another boy's backyard—and he was the biggest."

"You might have tried to help the poor moth," I insisted, still struggling with the choke in my throat, "you might at least have tried, Mr. King."

"I did try," was the calm response. "If the other chap still lives he bears the marks of my youthful and infrequent teeth upon his bold right hand."

"Have you seen enough, Aimée?" asked Mr. Lannion. He spoke almost timidly. "It is very late. You can come out to-morrow evening and look at the primroses by moonlight. I will bring you. Won't you come back to the house now?" I noticed that he avoided the word home.

As we mounted the steps I stopped for an instant to look up at the stars. Mr. King sighed.

"Ornith Farm," he said meditatively, "such a pretty name! And such an infinite variety of birds have alighted here—'Birds of a feather flock together'! Quaint old saying!"

I laughed drearily. "Ornith Farm!" I repeated, waving my hand to right and left, indicating its broad stretch of acres; "shall we dub the house Mr. Lannion's Aviary—or simply call it Lannion's Cage?"

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Without waiting for an answer I ran quickly into the hall and up to my room. The little room was very dim and shadowy. It was only after I had sat some time upon my bed, fighting down the sobs that strove to master me, that I could distinguish, across the room, Delcie's dark face outlined against the white pillow. She slumbered peacefully, unaware of my desertion. But it was long before sleep brought oblivion to me.

## XVIII

It was not until ten the next morning that I went to my accustomed seat under the maples. I had slept late. Hardly had I settled myself and begun listlessly to hem the strip of muslin upon which—under Delcie's tuition—I was to learn to sew (that part of my education having been neglected) when Roddy came around the corner of the house. He ran to me and, leaning familiarly against my knee, began eagerly to relate the latest household events.

"Say, what do you s'pose? Mother's in the kitchen makin' gingersnaps! She and Zayma had it hot and heavy first"—he giggled rapturously—"you just ought to have heard 'em go it! Zayma said she shouldn't—sassed mother fearful—but mother walked into her, hammer and tongs. Ebenezer" (the old black cat) "was so scared he climbed up on the clock shelf. When he got there he was 'fraid he'd fall off, an' 'fraid to climb down. So he hung on and hollered." The child laughed out, overcome by the comicality of his remembrance.

"And you helped him down?" I asked, smiling in sympathy.

"No, I didn't," was the energetic response. "He's a cruel old beast, Ebenezer is; I was glad he was most frightened to death. I jumped at him, to scare him more."

"Oh, Roddy!" I exclaimed in remonstrance.

"Well," insisted the child, "I did, and served him right. I've seen him do beastly mean things, that old cat! I hate him. But I won't tell you what I've seen. You're so soft you'd cry; but there, you can't



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help it, girls are made that way. Say," in another burst of confidence, "you just ought to have heard mother when old Ebenezer began to howl! She lammed into Zayma harder than ever. 'See your own cat,' she said awful loud, 'even that unfortunate creature knows and fears your wickedness! But I ain't afraid of you, Zayma Jasper, and I'll learn you to keep a civil tongue in your head.' Then"—Roddy spoke slowly and reflectively—"then she caught sight of me——"

"Yes?" I said encouragingly.

He grinned impishly. "Oh, nothin'," he said indifferently, "only I quit."

There was silence for a few moments, then Roddy spoke again. "Don't you like cake?" he asked.

"Pretty well," I said.

"Mother says," he continued, "that you haven't any sweet tooth." I smiled. "Pop says that she doesn't know anything about what you've got or what you haven't. Tom says— Say, did you know Tom had gone away?"

"No," I said quickly. "For how long?"

"One week, maybe two," was the answer. "You like Tom as much as I do, I guess." Roddy spoke approvingly. I nodded. I wondered what Mr. King had gone for. Could it be to find out if I were really Hope Carmichael? My heart began to beat. "There," exclaimed Roddy, "you've pricked yourself! I knew you would, your fingers tremble so. Here, take my handkerchief—oh," after a hasty search through several overcrowded pockets, "I haven't any!"

"Never mind," I said hastily, "it's really nothing, Roddy. Fancy my minding a tiny prick like that! What did Mr. King say?"

"About what? Oh, I know, about your eating. But he said I wasn't to tell——"

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"Then you must not," I interrupted.

"Yes, but 'twas only Uncle Rollis and Pop who weren't to hear. Tom doesn't like Uncle Rollis and Pop. I wonder why? Tom thinks a heap of you. He says you're clean grit all through. Tom says you eat as if you was in training. That means"—in kindly if condescending explanation—"trainin' for a race or something. Men, athletes, Tom says, eat awful careful when they're going in for a race. It's muscle, not fat, they're after, Tom says. He says you're made of muscle—is that so?" And the child stared at me questioningly.

"Shall I tell you a story, a fairy story?" I asked. I rose and went to the hammock.

"Yes," cried Roddy delightedly, crawling in to lie down beside me, "and that will help me to wait for the gingersnaps. It'll be an awful long time before they're done."

It was a long time. Roddy and I had exhausted fairy tales and many other amusements, and had taken to building card houses when Mrs. Despard, deeply flushed, but with an air of triumphant dignity, emerged from the house. She carried a plate heaped high with the crisp cookies that Roddy loved. Coming to the edge of the veranda, she stood and stared down at me as I carefully adjusted a king of spades, serving as roof to the last house the child had been building.

Roddy hopped up directly and began to help himself liberally.

"Shame, for shame, Roddy!" cried his mother in shocked remonstrance. "What will Miss Darling think of you, I'd like to know? Ladies first, always."

"I'm getting them for her," said Rodgers quickly, dropping his handful into my lap. "You'll eat 'em, won't you, Aimée?" he asked in coaxing tones.

To please the child I accepted one, returning the

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others. Mrs. Despard looked on, an odd expression in her hard eyes.

"I've found out about the outfit," she said at last. "I just went upstairs with these snaps, and would have walked in where they was without knocking (which I knew any kind of hot ginger-bread is always welcome to every creature wearing pants) only Loo Despard and Tom King met me at the top and told me all. Which the love of cookies loosened their tongues, the road to a man's heart bein' through his stummick." She nodded her head several times. "What do you think it is? The outfit, I mean. Nothin' in the world but writing and printing stuff! Yes, you may believe me or not as you choose, Miss Darling"—she spoke impressively—"Rollis Lannion has wrote a book, and these men, which you saw them when they came, are copying it out for him! And I will say" (flushing still more deeply in sudden recollection) "that for all impudent darkies that Zayma is the worst! I obliged, yes, obliged her to leave the kitchen, and where do you suppose she went? Up to the third story, if you please! What for? I'm sure I can't imagine, but I guess it was to try an' make the doctor come down and stop me makin' these snaps—which I just guessed Loo Despard laughed at her for her pains! Anyway, she looked sneaky enough when I met her. How Rollis Lannion can put up with her and that great hulking Solomon Jasper, I'm sure I don't know. Well, do you like the snap, child? Not too much ginger, no?"

I said what was quite true, that the little cake was delicious. Mrs. Despard beamed with satisfaction, and told Roddy to bring her a chair as she wished to talk to me.

"Run and play, sonny-boy," she said, as she seated herself in the big chair he dragged forward. "It's

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my turn to talk to your Grace Darling now. That's what he calls you, my dear"—Roddy blushed crimson—"you're his sweet girl, or Grace Darling, always. And"—speaking with pompous kindness—"I tell him to be polite and nice to you, to behave like——"

Here Roddy interrupted rudely. "I'd do that anyway," he cried defiantly. "She's used to boys, Aimée is, and she misses her cousins dreadfully. Wild Will, and Sam the Cool—twins *they* are—and jolly Lord Ronald, and——"

"Rodgers Despard," cried Mrs. Despard shrilly, getting up in her excitement, "hush this minute! How dare you talk like that when you know your Uncle Rollis would——"

"He isn't my uncle," said Roddy, breaking recklessly in upon her reproof, "and you know it. And I hate him, yes, I do! And I wish Pop did, an' then we could leave this nasty old place; and you wish so, too, and you know you do, and it's mean, yes, mean, and—and——"

The child broke down. He began to cry and, ashamed of what he considered an unmanly weakness, ran hastily away. His mother, pale and disturbed, sank down into her chair again and stared helplessly at me.

"Please don't be angry with Roddy," I said, leaning across the card village and lowering my voice; "he has been so good to me; such a great comfort, Mrs. Despard."

"Rollis Lannion would beat him if he knew what the boy had said," she whispered, glancing fearfully around.

"No one has heard," I urged. "No one can have. See, Delcie went away when you came."

"Yes, yes," was the anxious answer, "but the walls have ears, and Rollis Lannion——"

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I interrupted her quickly. "Never mind about him now, dear Mrs. Despard," I said, still speaking very softly; "but please let me tell you my story just this once."

"No, no," she insisted; she looked very much frightened; "I know your story already, and it's bad for you talking wild like you want to. And the doctor says you're not to do it. Of course it does seem strange to me, I will admit, R. L.'s bein' so set on marryin' you after getting the mitten from your mother—which he must have been a mere boy when it happened, and she preferring Mr. Darling, and no wonder, him bein' rich an' suitable as to age, while Rollis Lannion—hush!" She ceased speaking and glanced fearfully toward the open door. "Did you hear anything?"

I listened intently. A soft south wind sighed gently as it moved through the branches of the maples overhead, but all else was still.

"It seems odd," I said, forcing myself to speak meditatively, "very odd that Mr. Lannion insists upon my remaining here." Mrs. Despard gave me her entire, if fearful, attention. "I wish that—since he and Dr. Despard think me insane—" (Mrs. Despard started involuntarily at this blunt statement, but, moved by curiosity and, I hope, some kinder feeling, let me continue) "that they would send me to some large sanitarium. Or, better still, to a public asylum."

"Why?" burst out Mrs. Despard, unable to control her inquisitiveness longer.

"If a girl thinking herself Hope Carmichael, and looking exactly like her, were taken to any large asylum for the insane," I said slowly, "I think some one there would be moved to investigate. I think some one might be willing to write to her friends; to her aunt, Mrs. Carmichael, or to her fiancé, Mr.

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Max Errol, and tell of the poor girl's—shall we say hallucination?"

"Well, well, what for?" demanded Mrs. Despard.

"Let us say just to comfort me, Mrs. Despard," I whispered. "What harm would it do me to see these people that I believe to be my own people? Do you think that they would refuse to give me this consolation, Mrs. Despard? If any unfortunate creature believed that you were her nearest of kin, would you refuse to go to her—just once? If you had lost a niece who had been as a daughter to you, would you——"

Mrs. Despard rose abruptly. She had grown very pale. She walked away to the western end of the veranda, and stood for some time gazing at the wide-spread prospect. The great stretch of woodland and meadows, and far in the distance the Hudson, looking, as always from Ornith Farm, like a slender, unsheathed sword. Presently I stole after her and laying my hand lightly upon her arm, pressed my cause.

"A little letter to Mrs. Carmichael," I urged—I was careful to speak gently—"or a few lines to Mr. Errol, Mrs. Despard. You would harm no one, and think what you would be doing for me!" She turned and looked at me steadily. I answered the question in her eyes. "Yes," I said slowly, "if the Carmichaels and the Errols agree with your husband and Mr. Lannion, and think me insane, then I, too, will believe it. Does it ever seem strange to you, Mrs. Despard, that Mr. Lannion should wish to marry an insane girl?"

"My goodness!" she exclaimed. "I never thought of it, but now that you put it plain——" She stopped speaking, she was even paler than before. She pressed her lips together tightly, she had the look of one who faces a difficult step. "If I thought even

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for one moment," she began, and she tossed her head defiantly; "but no, it can't be. Why, child, they wouldn't dare! It's just your imagination, just——"

"Then what harm would it do to write?" I persisted. "A letter could do no harm. I only ask for fair play, Mrs. Despard. Just a few lines to those I believe to be my relations, just three words asking them to come."

"You've been awful good to my Roddy," said Mrs. Despard, as if in argument; "you've made a different boy of him, I'll say that. Always cheerful an' ready to play with the child, never mind how low your spirits may be, which is somethin' I've noticed an' so's Aileen; she was speaking of it only this morning, while as for Tom King, which is devoted to Rodgers, 'Roddy's got a playfellow now,' says Tom, only a few mornings back, 'which never tires!' And, as you say, a letter—oh, here you are, Delcievere," as Delcie came out again upon the veranda. "Have you tasted my snaps? No? Well, Roddy's left quite a few on this plate; just help yourself, will you? I'm due upstairs now."

She went away without looking toward me. Had I made my appeal in vain?

"If Mrs. Despard's mind was as sizable as her heart," commented Delcie, as she munched a crisp snap with strong white teeth, "and if she was without such a superfluity of temper——"

"If—if—if!" I cried, nodding with assumed gayety at my comely maid. "Who is perfect, please, Delcievere?"

"Not the two that came as visitors yesterday, my Honey-love," she answered promptly. "Just two common low-down men. Individuals, not gentlemen. Lawsy me, no!"

## XIX

Upon my first coming to Ornith Farm I was pleased that my wish to take my meals by myself had been so readily complied with. After the arrival of the two visitors, however, I regretted this, since it prevented my having any opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. And in every new face I might hope to find understanding and pity. The two men were, as Delcie had said, unattractive in appearance and manners. The elder—a man of middle age—hardly looked my way when we chanced to meet in the halls or on the staircase; the other, a flashily dressed youth, glanced furtively at me with a greedy curiosity most unpleasant to my pride. They never came upon the veranda when I was there, but sat upon the steps at the entrance, or smoked their cigars in the stables. They spent most of their time in the third story.

Desirous of leaving no stone unturned, realizing that help might come from the most unlikely quarter, I now suggested taking my meals with the family. Dr. Despard vetoed this at once. He said that he considered it much wiser for me to avoid—when possible—all intercourse with strangers; conversation with other than intimate friends might prove injuriously exciting. Mrs. Despard was present when her husband thus gave his professional opinion. She stared, but made no comment. I would have given much to know if she had written to my people. Had she done so my captivity could last only a few days longer. This knowledge kept me in a state of nervous excitement hard to conceal.



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On Friday morning when—had the letter gone—I might expect something to happen, I was too restless to remain in one place many minutes at a time. The day was gloomy; the sky overcast, and an east wind keening. A disagreeable chill was in the air; and although the thermometer told us that it was July, this odd chill made itself felt, seeming to underlie the heat. The women in the house were as little at ease as I. Aileen was worried because her husband's weekly letter had not come; Mrs. Despard avoided being alone with me, and Delcie had had bad news from home. Her mother was very ill. I decided to try if I could distract my mind by reading and, after being assured by Delcie that Mr. Lannion was out, I went to the library in search of a book.

The lower hall was empty, and I closed the door of the library behind me, thankful to be free from open espionage if only for an hour. This apparent freedom was mine because the gardener was busy cutting the grass within sight of the windows. Although these were closed on account of the dampness, I could hear the locust-like br-r-r of his lawnmower as he moved to and fro.

The room, always gloomy, was doubly so because of the darkening skies. As I stood for a moment by one of the tall windows the rain began tap, tap, tap against the pane. Each drop was as a little hammer against my heart, driving in deeper, with every dull thud, the nails of despair that were beginning to corrode it. I turned away determinately. Let me battle against weakness unworthy of my upbringing. I must try to behave always as Katie, the boys—Max, would have me. I looked about the room remembering my errand.

Those who had already visited the library that morning had left a slight disorder behind them.

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The big table, disencumbered of inkstand, bookrack, and its usual furnishings, was covered with open maps. Oddly enough they shaped—as they lay—the number seven. Upon them, as if its reader, hastily summoned, had expected to return immediately, was placed a book showing a narrow edge of blue cover around the open page. Leaning idly upon the table to read its title, I was surprised to find myself face to face with a well-loved old friend. Tears blurred my eyes as I looked, brought by memories of my happy childhood when my nurse had read aloud from this book until I knew all its wisdom by heart. Roddy must have left it on the table, I thought. Who else in this house full of grown men and women would care to read “Tanglewood Tales”? The book lay open in a way that proved it often read. This must be a favorite story. I glanced at the top of the page.

### “The Pomegranate Seeds.”

Then the hot color surged into my face, for I saw that the book was open where Pluto makes his appeal to the child, Proserpina, and the following lines were marked:

“She ran back to him, and, for the first time in all her life, put her small, soft hand in his.

“‘I love you a little,’ whispered she, looking up in his face.”

Outraged, indignant, I caught up this witness of my jailer's belief in the efficacy of patience, anxious to place it where none else might read. The next moment I had swung myself up on the broad table, just in time to avoid the furious onslaught of Malvina, who, unseen by me, had lain hidden but on guard. I spoke quickly, sternly, to her, thinking she had but to recognize me to realize her mistake. She backed steadily until a sufficient distance was be-

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tween her and the table, then crouched—and sprang!

Knowing now her intent I made no useless effort to soothe her into quiet, but bracing myself, I struck her as she came within reach with the volume that I still held in my hand. The blow caught her on the side of her head; she swerved and dropped to the floor. But again, silently, her pale, pink-rimmed eyes fixed upon me, she retreated, and, the necessary distance attained, made another attempt to reach me.

The book, my sole weapon, was neither large nor heavy. As I once more struck her, and again was successful—breaking the force of her spring and causing her to fall short of the table—I felt her teeth against my fingers. I was keenly conscious of my danger, yet I dared not waste strength in outcries for help. The dog was almost as silent as I. Save for a low, smothered sound in her throat, more a sharp panting than an articulate growl, she repeated with a horrible patience of endeavor, her effort to gain my stronghold and fasten her teeth in my throat. As the time passed her eyes became bloodshot; flakes of foam showed upon her pink, black-lined jaws. She never hurried, never lost her power to calculate to an inch the length of the jump required. Her rage of hatred was as cold as it was deadly. What if my strength should fail!

The rain still kept up its monotonous tapping at the window. The sound of the lawn-mower came from a distance; the edge of the lawn must have been reached. I listened as I watched the dog—a wild beast now, in her blood thirst—hoping to hear some one in the hall. But the silence was profound.

In her desire to gain a better vantage-point for attack, the dog had edged little by little around the table. Soon she was between me and the big mirror behind which the door, leading into the parlor, was

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hidden. Because of this I found myself in greater stress. For now I seemed to be warding off two dogs, since the broad sheet of glass reflected, with cruel clearness, the strange scene. I strove to keep my eyes fixed upon the real dog, but, in spite of every effort, I caught distracting nightmare glimpses of the two figures in the mirror; Malvina's double, and my own. The girl, her face as colorless as her fluttering muslins, kneeling upon the map-strewn table, and the crouching foam-flecked dog. This dizzying reflection made me ever fear to miss my stroke. My fingers, and the dog's jaws, were bleeding. If I should fail——

I struck again and yet again. I could no longer listen for approaching footsteps; in my ears there was now the sound as of a hundred trip-hammers. I wondered how much longer I might depend upon seeing clearly. A mist seemed coming before my eyes. Ah! my hand slipped. The dog's teeth fastened in my frock. I struck at her blindly, unceasingly. I cried out in loathing at her touch—the end had come—but I would not give up—never—never——

Suddenly she was seized, wrenched away from me. There was the rasp of tearing muslin, a heavy thud, the sound of a door hastily closed.

I sank down upon the table too much exhausted to move, and too much dazed by my escape to wonder who had rescued me. But before I had had time to regain control of brain and overstrained muscles, I was gently lifted from my cramped position and carried to the sofa. It was Mr. Lannion to whom I owed my safety. His face was white and set, and there was no mistaking the anguish of anxiety in his eyes. I saw him glance at my bleeding hands, and, reading his fear, found my voice.

"She did not bite me," I said faintly. "These

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are mere scratches. The book was little. My hands struck against her—ah!" I could not continue, the conflict was too recent. I broke off, shuddering at the memory.

Mr. Lannion again caught me in his arms, straining me to him. I felt his lips upon my hair.

"My little girl," he said brokenly, "my poor little girl! God—if I had been too late!"

He was shaken by his emotion, but I was too tired after my late struggle to notice it much. I pushed him from me fretfully, but I let him heap cushions beneath my head when he quickly put me down, and yielded to his wish that I would rest a moment before trying to go upstairs.

"I will get water and bathe your hands," he said gently, "and bring you a glass of wine. I have everything in here."

He motioned toward the door of the inner room and would have left me, but I caught his arm in terror.

"Malvina?" I questioned with white lips. "She is in there?"

He looked at me strangely, but did not answer at once. It was as if he were weighing his words.

"Yes," he said at last, "she is there, but you need not fear her. She will never seek to hurt you again."

I stared at him in sudden horror. "You have killed her?" I asked, under my breath.

"Yes," was the brief response.

"Ah!" I cried, "how could you have the heart? She loved you so!"

He stood silent beside me, looking down at me, as if he could not understand my outburst. His face was set like iron, and his brows bent. His expression seemed to me fiercely cruel as he said:

"She disobeyed me. She had had orders never to

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hurt you. She tried to—" He glanced at the rent in my frock and ceased speaking. Then he went quickly into the next room, returning almost immediately with a glass of wine, and some water with which to wash my stained hands. "There is cologne in this," he said, as drawing a chair close beside me he dipped his handkerchief in the water and began, oh, so gently, to lave the wounded spots. "Does it smart?" he asked presently, in the tone of an overanxious nurse to a favorite child. His harsh features wore an expression of great tenderness.

I watched his powerful, deft fingers—and wondered! What tremendous wrists he had! When he chose, his fists must have the force of sledge-hammers. And now, because of this great force, he was doing woman's work, as well—or better—than a woman. His task absorbed him. He had forgotten himself in it. I had had to drink every drop of the wine. He could think of nothing save caring for me, for my well-being, for my comfort.

I moved to an upright position. His gray-green eyes glowed with satisfaction at this sign of returning strength. I took out my own handkerchief and insisted upon drying my fingers myself. He acquiesced instantly and, leaving his chair, seated himself beside me upon the sofa and watched me with indulgent approval. And I, I looked at his hands, and thought of the dog. How had he killed her? A single blow from those powerful hands would have been enough. Why, he must have the strength of a blacksmith. Then, with one of those strange, swift changes of thought that are unaccountable, I remembered a certain summer day at Moaning Pines.

I turned upon the man beside me. I looked at him squarely. "You killed the old wolf-hound," I said slowly. "*You* killed Sergius Boris—Best."

He started violently, an ugly red flushed his face

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from brow to chin. "It was in self-defence—I swear it," he said quickly. "And I did not take his rose!"

I shrank back among my cushions. I think that there was hatred in my eyes.

"Hope," he cried hoarsely, "don't look at me like that! I did not want to kill him, but he was at my throat before I could get away. I felt I must see you ride. I slit the canvas; the old dog heard—and I left him his rose."

He looked at me as if expecting me to speak. But I could not. Neither could I rise and leave him. My strength had deserted me altogether. I could only sit quite still—but my eyes seemed to speak for me.

"If you would but realize my position," he went on, "I think you would forgive me. I loved you when, a little child, you gave me luck with your gift of golden-rod. Then when I saw you under the pine tree, grown still lovelier, and singing like a bird, I could not resist speaking to you. And, later, I felt I must see you ride—all the countryside rang with stories of your riding. I know it was wrong"—he lowered his voice, dominating his excitement—"and extremely foolish. I regretted bitterly the mischief I had done. I knew that the dog was your pet, I had seen you fondling him, so I did not touch his rose."

My lips were parched and dry, my voice did not seem to belong to me when I at last spoke.

"And this last mischief," I asked faintly, "do you now regret it—bitterly?"

He sprang to his feet and walked to the window, as though unable at once to answer. Then, returning, he began in his methodical way to fold the maps upon the table with neat precision, and, after putting them away, replaced the inkstand and other

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table furniture. I was well aware that he himself did not know what he was doing; I realized that he was—unconsciously—but following his usual custom, while his mind faced the crisis that had come. Finally he turned, and, leaning against the table, confronted me.

"I did no deliberate mischief," he said steadily. "I merely took the good the gods provided. I have done no wrong." He looked at me fixedly. I could not fathom the meaning in his eyes.

"I fail to understand," I faltered. I held myself upright, I sustained his steady gaze, but I could not keep my voice from trembling.

His expression did not change, and when the explanation came I wondered if I should ever comprehend his strange view-point.

"I have done no wrong," he said gravely, "because I did not plan to get you for myself. You came to me of your own free will; you held out your arms to me, and cried to me to take you. I did what any man would have done under the circumstances. No more, and no less."

"What!" I cried, indignation giving me fictitious strength, "you dare pretend that I was not in danger of shipwreck when I called for help? You dare pretend to believe that I wanted to leave my home, that I wished to—" I broke off, I could not finish my sentence, it was beyond me to voice what he feigned to believe.

"That you wished to live with me, you would say?" He smiled grimly as he spoke. "No, my child, I had no such wild fancy. But I knew that you would most assuredly be drowned if I did not care for you quickly, as I knew, also, that everybody would think you had been. Indeed, to all intents and purposes, you were dead to your past the moment you (of your own free will, I beg you to re-



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member) asked me to save you. I believe in fate," he continued gravely. "Three times you crossed my path. Twice you brought me good fortune; for everything prospered after I had met you. Now——"

"Now," I interrupted, "I shall be your bane. Twice I met you, and each time I wished you well. Now, I pray God——"

"Hush!" he cried quickly. "Don't injure yourself."

"Myself?" I asked. Again he spoke in riddles.

"Yes," he said quietly, "yourself, for you are to be my wife. My fortunes will be yours—until death parts us."

I laughed—a little wildly. "Death?" I said softly. "Ah, yes, I thank you. I had forgotten that, in God's great mercy, the Death Angel sometimes saves souls. If need be may he save yours—and mine, Mr. Lannion."

I rose, and rejecting his offers of assistance, walked slowly from the room.

## XX

I was thankful that I met no one on my way to my room, and that I found it empty. I had dreaded Delcie's outcry over my bruised hands. I made haste to cover with plaster the places where the skin was most noticeably broken, but I could do nothing to hide the discoloration that must follow.

After I had changed my frock I tried to get my thoughts under control. In this I failed. Mr. Lan-nion had given up the farce in regard to my insanity when we were alone together; would he do so when the other members of the household were present? I strove to arrange a course of action for the future, but my mind refused to do anything save dwell upon the scene that I had just lived through. I tried, too, to brace myself for the wondering sympathy of Mrs. Despard; she would ask endless and difficult questions. Later I should have to talk much of the incident to Aileen.

But the morning passed and no one came to interrupt my solitude. There was more noise in the house than usual, and I, with youthful egotism, fancied at first that it was because of me. I said to myself that they had now heard of Malvina's attack, and of her death. Each moment I expected Mrs. Despard to rush in, all excitement and curiosity. When she failed to appear, and the sound of constant coming and going continued, I peeped out into the hall. Cooper and Jasper were carrying a large trunk down from the third story. I closed my door quickly, not wishing to be seen. The two strangers must be leaving. Later, hearing the sound repeated, I thought

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that they had brought much luggage for so short a stay, but I did not look out again.

It was Jasper, not Delcie, who brought me my luncheon, and he gave me ill tidings. Delcie, he said, had had sad news from home; her mother was dying, and she had hurried away. Nanny would come when I rang.

Although I took it for granted that Delcie would soon return, I had an odd, forsaken feeling without her. Her gentle care had been my sole comfort. I had grown fond of her.

In the late afternoon there came a knock at my door. Supposing that Nannie was outside I called "Come in," without leaving my seat by the window. I was busy sewing on the work that Delcie had prepared for me, having a childish desire to finish it during her absence, since this would give her pleasure. I did not even look up until the incomer said:

"What an industrious little woman! But you will hurt your pretty eyes."

Then I rose hastily, for it was Mr. Lannion.

"May I sit down?" he asked, as I gave him no greeting.

I shook my head. "No," I said gravely. "And please say what you have come to say quickly, Mr. Lannion."

"What a cold welcome," he exclaimed reproachfully, "when I went to town through mud and mire to get something to please you! See"—he placed a *bonbonnière* upon my dressing-table—"I have brought you your favorite *marrons*. You eat no luncheon, and I hoped that these might tempt you."

I murmured a cold "thank you." I wished that he would go away. But he carried a large paper box in addition to the one that held the *marrons*, and this he now offered me, taking my work out of my hands as he did so.

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"Sit down," he said coaxingly, and advancing so close that I had no choice but to yield, "and look what I have in here for you."

He laid the box on my lap and took off the cover. A delicious fragrance floated into the room; the perfume of the heliotrope with which the box was filled. The purple sprays were damp and soft; their odor was rich, enervating. I glanced up at the man bending over me; I did not like the expression in his strange eyes.

"Put in your hand and see what you will find," he said gently, attuning his rough voice to as soft a key as he might.

"A snake?" I suggested, not offering to obey.

Pretending not to hear, he himself parted the masses of purple blooms and drew out a jewel box. I kept my eyes fixed upon his face; I did not touch the little case of green morocco. And, as before, he had to do himself what he had planned that I should do. He opened the box and displayed its hidden treasure, a large horseshoe in diamonds. This he took out and held up for me to admire.

"A pendant?" I said in expressionless tones. "I thought it must be a scarf-pin for the younger of your two friends."

"A scarf-pin?" he repeated in unfeigned surprise. "This big thing?"

"None too large for your friend's taste," I said seriously. "He seems fond of large showy things."

Mr. Lannion replaced the pendant and closed the case with a snap. "Even if you don't care for me," he said gloomily, "I can see no reason why you should treat me like this! I have done my best to please you. I don't care for sweets, or flowers, or diamonds, but I ride seven miles through the rain, and spend half my afternoon in stuffy cars and close shops, to get them for you, and you throw them in

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my face. That idiotic bauble cost a pretty penny. Why don't you like it, child?"

I did not answer.

"The watch and the buckle pleased you," he went on. "You accepted them. Why won't you take this pendant, pray?"

"I don't know," I said listlessly. "Because you wanted to buy it, I suppose. You grudged the others."

"I don't understand," he said, and he stared anxiously at me as though striving to.

"You can have a pin put on it," I suggested indifferently, "and give it to your flashy friend, or you can change it for something for yourself. Perhaps they will give you your money back. I wish you would take these flowers away, please. Their odor is so heavy it makes me faint. And I am tired of *marrons*. You might give them to Roddy. Is Nanny to be with me to-night?"

"No," he said curtly, gathering up both flowers and bonbons, "Zayma."

"Zayma!" I exclaimed, springing up. "But I won't have her."

"You will have to," he said grimly; "she is the only person I can trust."

"But when I tell you I will not?" I insisted. He did not answer, but moved toward the door, which stood wide. "I will not, Mr. Lannion," I repeated, stamping my foot. "I will not, I will not, I will not!"

Mrs. Despard was crossing the hall as I spoke, and I spoke so that any or all might hear. She hesitated, wavered, then came to my door. She looked tired and blowed, as if she had been working hard.

"Is anything wrong, Aimée?" she said.

I felt very grateful, for I knew that it had not

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been without effort that she had come to my assistance. Like everybody at the Farm she stood in awe of its master. I ran past Mr. Lannion and caught her hand.

"Dear Mrs. Despard," I said impulsively, "won't you stay with me to-night? Delcie has gone, and Mr. Lannion says I must have Zayma, and I detest her so."

"Yes, yes, dearie, of course I will," she answered soothingly, then added, bridling: "Unless you object, Rollis?"

He stood silent regarding us, his arms filled with the rejected gifts, but before he had decided how to answer, Mrs. Despard caught sight of my hands.

"Aimée, child," she cried in alarm, "whatever has happened to your hands?" She took them gently in her own, exclaiming in real sorrow over their condition: "Such dear, sweet little hands, and all covered with bruises! Rollis," she turned to Mr. Lannion, "have you seen the child's hands? Do look at them——"

She broke off, startled by his expression.

"I cannot heal them," he said harshly, "nor would she let me if I could."

I smiled at him suddenly. "You will allow me to accept Mrs. Despard's kind offer, I am sure, Mr. Lannion," I said coaxingly. "And you must not worry about my hands—either of you. They will soon be well."

"Let me look at them," he said.

He dropped the boxes on the floor, and as Mrs. Despard released my hands, he caught them in his own and, bending his tall head, covered them with kisses. Too startled at first to move, I gave him his way, but Mrs. Despard struck him sharply on the shoulder.

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"You've gone stark mad, Rollis Lannion," she cried. "Come to yourself, man!"

He did not answer, but leaving his boxes where they lay, went into his own room and closed the door. Mrs. Despard, her lips tightly shut, picked up the fallen treasures and made a neat heap of these belongings at his threshold.

"I'm very busy now," she said to me, "but I'll keep Zayma in her place—the huzzy! Loo Despard shall come to you at ten sharp, and wait till I can get ready. You won't mind his readin' quiet by your lamp? You can go to sleep with him there, can't you? Doctors are used to sittin' up with patients, you know. He won't mind a mite."

I did not want Dr. Despard, but an hour or two of his society being better than a whole night with Zayma, I tried to accept politely. Before she left me Mrs. Despard had to hear why my hands were in so strange a condition. Amazed that she had not already been told, I explained as briefly as possible. She exclaimed in terror over my narrow escape, and rejoiced to hear of the death of the dog. Poor Malvina had been generally feared and disliked. Upon my suggesting that Aileen had better not hear the story until morning, Mrs. Despard eyed me wistfully, then hurriedly acquiesced. Aileen, she said, had had many letters that morning and was already thinking too much.

"No bad news, I hope?" I said anxiously.

Mrs. Despard shook her head. "I hope not," was the uncertain answer. Then, as if to avoid being questioned, she hurried away.

Later, Nanny asked me if I would object to going to bed early. Mrs. Lucas needed her, she said, and if nine o'clock were not too soon for her to leave me—or half past nine, perhaps—Mrs. Lucas would be obliged. So at half past nine I was settled for the

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night, with Dr. Despard, established as watchman, reading by the table near the door. I did not speak to him when he entered but, with my face turned to the wall, pretended to be already asleep. I was in reality painfully awake. The noises of the night, the sounds in the house, all jarred alike upon my nerves. Outside, the storm-wind keened past my windows and worried the branches of the two great maples until they creaked and groaned in their efforts to shake themselves free. Within, there was the ticking of my own soft-voiced clock, the call of the big one in the lower hall, striking the hour and half hour, and the gentle stealthy rustle of the leaves of the pamphlet that Dr. Despard was reading. From Aileen's room came the subdued hum of women's voices; and, many times during the evening, the door was opened and closed, as if Mrs. Despard, or Nanny, had countless errands to run. I wondered—but asked no questions of my silent companion.

Ten o'clock struck. Mrs. Despard did not come, but I heard some one stop outside my door. The doctor rose and stole into the hall. I hastily changed my position; I was stiffened and weary from holding myself quiet. After a few moments of whispered conversation Dr. Despard returned to his former place and to his reading, yet it seemed to me that his interviewer still lingered. I thought I detected the muffled pad, pad of footsteps going and coming on the heavy carpet of the hall. Guessing who it was that cared to pace up and down, up and down, outside my door, it was soon all that I could do to repress the nervous trembling that came upon me as I listened. And when, suddenly, a shriek of terror rang out, I started violently, echoing it in spite of myself.

"Only Roddy," said Dr. Despard, throwing down his book and coming quickly to my side. "He has



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the nightmare." (Aileen's door opened, and there followed a sudden rush across the hall.) "His mother has gone to him," he added soothingly; "there is no cause for alarm."

I sat up in bed, staring at him in doubt, wide-eyed with unreasoning fear. He smiled at me reassuringly.

"I keep you awake, and I am sorry," he said kindly. "You have not had even one little nap, and it is now nearly eleven. Mrs. Despard will be here directly. Do you think you will be able to compose yourself? Shall I give you something to quiet your nerves?"

I thanked him, but declined. I wondered how he had known that I was awake, and how any one could appear so kind yet be so cruel. I lay back among my pillows. I wished that he would cease looking at me so earnestly—his eyes were uncomfortably bright and keen. Why did he not resume his book? Instead, he drew up a chair and seated himself beside my bed.

"You have no faith in me as a doctor," he remarked presently, "and as a man you dislike me. Mine is a hard case." He smiled, but sighed a little at the same time, as though he really felt regret because of my attitude. "Yet I wish you well," he added, speaking in a lower tone, "believe it or not as you like."

"Doubtless," I said coldly, "provided that my well-being does not interfere with your comfort. Mr. Lannion and his wishes, rank me and my rights—*voilà tout!*"

Dr. Despard avoided meeting my eyes as I finished. He looked up instead at the sevens that seemed fairly agog with curiosity over this change in my companions.

"I did not look for thanks," he said quietly, "and

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I knew that you distrusted me. Have you ever noticed the curious way in which the pattern of this frieze resolves itself into sevens?"

"They are trying to bring me luck," I said.

As I ceased speaking Mrs. Despard entered. She looked disturbed, irritated. Without addressing either of us in particular she burst into speech.

"I'd just like to know who's been filling that child's head with such scary nonsense! Which I believe it's that Tommy King; there's nothin' he doesn't say but his prayers—and then he whispers, for all he's been an off and on minister, so to speak."

She stopped for breath, and glanced from her husband to me in search of sympathy, but before we had time to express it, recommenced her jeremiad.

"And Roddy fairly screeching his head off with nightmare, and when I run in, it's 'mother, mother, the wolf, the wolf!' And when I try to quiet him, he says the beast is after his Grace Darling, meaning you"—she nodded her head at me—"and we must fetch Pop to save you. Then I was getting him soothed down when he catches holt of me and whispers, 'Hush! I hear it prowlin' in the hall now—oh, mother, mother, what shall we do?' Which for a moment, I'm free to confess, I kinder had the creeps myself, and just hated to go and look out, as naturally I had to, it bein' the only way to comfort the boy. But, will you believe it? when I did go, an' thought to make him feel real good by tellin' him that 'twas only his Uncle Rollis he heard walking up and down, so everything was all right an' he could turn over an' go to sleep, he took on worse than ever. Which he began to talk of were-wolves and loogarews and a lot of things I never heard of. What does Tommy King—which is a limb of Satan, anyway—mean by filling the child's head with such stuff?"

She stared at her husband indignantly, suspi-

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ciously, as if secretly feeling that he, too, might be blameworthy. Dr. Despard smiled, as though he found grim amusement in the affair.

"So Tom believes in lycanthropy, does he?" He spoke musingly, as though but thinking aloud. "Well, I have never met with a case of it; but then my practice has not been a wide one."

"I wish you'd talk sense," said Mrs. Despard irritably, eying him with extreme disfavor. "What do you mean, anyway? What's lie-what-do-you-call-it? What does Tom—the idiot—believe in?"

"In versipelles, apparently," said her husband, taking so evident a pleasure in further befogging her that there might have been an explosion, her wrath being high, had not an unexpected interruption occurred.

Poor Roddy, left alone, had evidently had another fright. For he now pattered in, in his night-clothes, and, after a quick glance in my direction had shown him that I was safe, caught his father about the knees and clung to him without speaking.

"There," exclaimed Mrs. Despard with her customary irrelevance, and speaking as though the doctor had been the willing cause of his son's terror, "now I hope you're satisfied, Loo Despard!"

But her husband, sitting down, drew the child kindly into his arms, remonstrating gently with him upon his unreasoning fear. "Why, Roddy," he said with playful tenderness, "do you want your old father to make a baby of you again? Must I come and sit by you until you go to sleep—is that what you want?"

"No, no," gasped the poor child, struggling manfully to keep back the tears; "I want you to stay right here. I only came to make sure. I—I——"

"You doubted my word, my son?" demanded Mrs. Despard majestically, but deeply wounded.

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Roddy turned his anxious little face toward her in piteous appeal for gentle judgment. "I believed you, of course, mother," he faltered, "but I wanted to make sure that Pop understood. You'll take care of her, Pop, won't you? I get so scared for her sometimes——"

"Why?" asked Dr. Despard, eying his son strangely. It was as if he feared the child.

"I don't know," said Roddy, breaking down in spite of himself and beginning to cry. "He's so big—and she's so little. And, oh, Pop, promise you'll look after her, do! She's all alone, and she misses the boys, and I'm no good, and, oh, Pop, Pop, say you will!" He flung his arms around his father's neck, clutching him desperately in his anxiety.

There followed an odd silence, broken at last by the sound of strange laughter. Dr. Despard was taking his son's appeal in a curious fashion, for his laughter held no vibration of real mirth.

"Certainly, Roddy"—he spoke with cold politeness—"I shall always do what I can for Miss Darling, of that you may be sure."

The boy disengaged himself and slid down from his father's knees, chilled by this reception of his prayer for help.

"Ain't you mean, Loo Despard!" exclaimed Mrs. Despard indignantly. "And don't you fret, son-boy! Mother'll look after your Grace Darling! Mother'll promise you, if father won't."

"You see I am not needed, Roddy," said Dr. Despard pleasantly. "Miss Darling has friends on all sides——"

The child had ceased sobbing. He had an odd look as if depressed into passivity by the failure of his father to respond. It was as though terra firma had suddenly given way. He climbed up on my bed and kissed me good-night, but this he did as if his

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young mind were too busy trying to readjust itself to a new scheme of the universe—solid earth having proved unreliable—to think much about the ordinary interchange of affection. He walked slowly to the door in a state of abstraction, forgetting to pay his father the same attention that he had just bestowed upon me, until reminded of his remissness. Then he did so coldly and dreamily, merely getting through with a necessary duty. When he reached the threshold, however, he paused and looked back at me. It was evident that the other two occupants of the room were forgotten in his absorption. Nodding his head at me wisely, he forced a smile and said, with a brave attempt at cheerfulness, as he left the room:

"After all, there's always God, you know! I guess you and me will just pray."

Dr. Despard, without the civility of leave-taking, followed his son. Mrs. Despard, silent for once, hurried her preparations for the night. Before lying down she came to my side and, impulsively taking my hands in hers, said with a suspiciously shaky voice:

"I guess you and me—will just pray."

She offered her petition in silence, then kissed me tenderly, and, without again speaking, retired to rest. I knew instinctively that she dreaded speech, fearing that she might betray what she had been bidden to keep from me. And I, dreading equally any breakdown in one so unaccustomed to exerting self-control, was careful to respect her wish for silence. She sighed heavily again and again, tossing from side to side as if vainly striving to forget her cares in the sleep that would not come. And when at last the heavy breathing told me that she was no longer wakeful, her frequent cries and moans of distress showed that even in slumber her worries haunted her still.

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I, too, had troubled sleep, after my day of miserable excitement. The old nightmare of the drifting boat, with Mary Hamilton for my companion, again tormented me. As before, we were being swung shoreward, on huge oily billows, toward a long stretch of sandy beach. But this time—probably because of little Roddy's terrors—it was not wreckers, waiting for their prey, that made the rapidly nearing shore a horror. On the white sand, lighted dimly by a waning moon, I dreamed I saw a shadow flitting restlessly up and down, as if impatient for our coming.

I strained my tired eyes. The light grew suddenly glaring, yet I could not quite determine what kind of creature watched us. Was it man, or wolf?

The world was bright with sunshine when I awoke. Roddy stood by my bedside, all smiles and happiness, his fears of the past night forgotten.

"Tom's back," he said delightedly the moment he was sure that I was awake, "and he's brought me this." He held up a three-masted schooner, all sails set. A toy to charm the heart of any boy. "I wish you'd come out with us," he continued, after I had expressed my admiration; "we're goin' to sail her in the fountain. Do get up and eat your breakfast soon! We'll wait, if you will. Tom says you must christen her; girls always christen new boats. Will you come?"

I promised to hurry my toilet and follow at once to the garden.

"No," said Roddy, "we'll wait in the hall. Say, guess what I'm going to name her?" I shook my head and said I could not. "The Grace Darling!" he announced, with a joyous giggle, "after both of you—grand, isn't it?" and he ran away.

## XXI

While I made all haste with my toilet, I found time to wonder that Roddy had been permitted to rouse me from my late nap. Hitherto it had been the aim of both Mr. Lannion and the doctor to promote in every way (save that of restoring me to my home) my bodily health. Delcie had had orders to encourage my sleeping as long and as late as possible, and Zayma exerted her utmost skill in preparing the dishes for my solitary meals. Did my appetite slacken Dr. Despard administered tonics, and Mr. Lannion sought far and near for dainties that might tempt it back. Mrs. Despard remonstrated, Aileen coaxed. I, my slumber, and my appetite, were of enormous importance to all. But this morning, when the doctor himself knew that I had slept ill, I was awakened early; and when for breakfast I drank a glass of milk, eating nothing, Nanny, my new attendant, made no comment. She had, indeed, so eager a manner as she served me it was as if she could scarcely get me off her hands fast enough.

Mr. Lannion was in the hall with Roddy when I went downstairs. He scrutinized me anxiously, then greeted me with affectionate tenderness.

"Dear little girl," he said, smiling, "how sweet and fresh you look! But I must not keep you, or Roddy will have a jealous bone to pick with me. I hear that you are to christen his boat."

"Yes," I said, "but there is no hurry. We must have something to christen it with."

So he, too, was anxious for my exit from the

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house! I stood still, my hand upon the newel post, watching his strong face. It was such a pity, I thought, that a man with so much force of character should not exert this power for good. And I began to wonder—for the first time, since I was young and unused to thinking out psychological problems—if his theft of my liberty was his first evil deed. Did any one ever take such a big first step downward?

And why did he want to get rid of me this morning? Roddy, dancing up and down in an agony of impatience, here insisted that I had promised to come into the garden with him immediately after my breakfast. I decided that it would be better to go, and come back unexpectedly.

"We must first get the champagne," I said.

"Champagne!" exclaimed Mr. Lannion. "My dear child, what are you thinking of? Every drop will be lost!"

"It always is when a vessel is christened," I said.

"Run, Roddy, and fetch a half-pint bottle of Veuve Cliquot."

"No, no," cried Mr. Lannion, as Roddy was making off to the pantry, "don't do that! Tell Jasper to fill an empty champagne bottle with water; that will do as well." I raised my eyebrows in surprise. "Lithia water, Roddy, a bottle of lithia," Mr. Lannion hastily amended, "sparkling lithia. That," he turned to me with a deprecatory smile, "will look just like champagne."

I sat down on the lowest step of the staircase. "A pint of Veuve Cliquot, Roddy," I said firmly. "I won't have any kind of pretence—I'm tired of it."

"Very well," said Mr. Lannion resignedly, "but a half-pint will do. Bring a half-pint, Roddy."

We neither of us spoke during the child's absence. Mr. Lannion had no small talk, and I was in no mood for civilities. Presently Roddy returned. He



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carried a half-pint bottle. I eyed it with extreme disfavor.

"I asked for a pint," I said.

"Yes," said poor Roddy, "but Uncle Rollis said—" He broke off, looking up at Mr. Lannion in embarrassment.

"I always imagined that thieves were liberal!" I observed. I spoke to nobody in particular, but I gazed in mild surprise at Mr. Lannion. He flushed deeply.

"Thieves!" he echoed. Then, lowering his voice he repeated, questioningly, "Thieves?"

"Yes," I said, "thieves. They are always supposed to be liberal—so we honest folk are told, anyway. You are the stingiest man I ever met, Mr. Lannion."

"I?" he exclaimed, but still speaking very softly. His expression was so strange that had I not been in a perfectly reckless mood, I might have felt sorry for my words. "What"—he spoke with a perceptible effort—"what have I to do with—but never mind. Roddy," he turned abruptly to the bewildered child, "get what Miss Darling asked for."

"A pint?" demanded Roddy.

"No, a quart," I said. "I would have been content with a pint had it been yielded gracefully. Now a quart is necessary. Perhaps a whole dozen of quarts will not lave my wounded vanity if you persist in——"

"Go, Roddy," interrupted Mr. Lannion quickly, "and bring a quart of champagne, before my unconscionable little empress has time to waste all my substance!"

He strove to speak lightly, but I saw that he was disturbed and ill at ease.

"Are Roddy and I to go alone to the garden?" I asked.

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"No," said Mr. Lannion, "Tom King is outside."

"Why outside?" I demanded.

"I happen to be out of favor," was the strange answer; "my roof casts a shadow too deep for him."

Before I could inquire further Roddy appeared with the big bottle and hurried me away. As I followed in his wake I found time to wonder over the curious feeling existing in men's minds in regard to the use of words. Had I classed Mr. Lannion with captors, jailers, or even kidnappers, I did not doubt but that he would have shrugged his shoulders in good-natured toleration of my over-strong English. The moment I dubbed him thief, he felt outraged; yet a thief he was, for he had stolen my liberty.

I saw Mr. King waiting for us at the garden gate, but I could not resist loitering a little. For the gay west wind was amusing itself by shaking the drops from the overburdened leaves of the pear-trees, still glossy and shining from the late storm. It would be delightful to stand beneath and catch this glistening, mimic rain upon outstretched palms. Only pity for the impatient Roddy prevented my indulging this fancy.

Mr. King advanced with dragging steps to meet me, and took the bottle of champagne. He looked five years older than when I had seen him last. Tired, haggard, and deeply depressed, he greeted me with no attempt at gayety.

"A very big bottle for a little lady to break against a toy prow," he said, smiling kindly down at me.

"Dear me," I exclaimed, eying the fat bottle in real consternation, "I forgot all about that!"

"What were you thinking of—if I may ask?" said Mr. King, watching me with friendly interest.

I blushed. "Of tormenting Mr. Lannion," I said frankly; adding impulsively, "It was not nice of me."

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I am ashamed. Petty revenges are contemptible. I would have despised condescending to use them once—but I seem to be changing for the worse. Captivity and—and fear”—I brought out this last shameful word with a great effort—“are having a bad effect.”

“Fear?” repeated Mr. King under his breath, looking at me strangely.

“Yes,” I whispered, “fear.”

“Oh, my God!” muttered Mr. King, paling visibly, and as if unconscious that he was speaking aloud.

“Are you two never coming?” shouted Roddy.

Ashamed of my forgetfulness I ran forward and joined the child. He commanded me not to set the fountain playing.

“That’s to come later,” he exclaimed, “in case we want to try the *Grace Darling* in wet weather. The spray will make grand rain, won’t it? Hurry up, Tom, please.

Turning to urge Mr. King to haste he cried out in alarm, for this usually dependable friend had taken out his pocket-knife and was preparing to cut the wires of the cork.

“Tom, oh, Tom!” wailed the child, in an agony of alarm, “what are you thinkin’ of? That’s the second fool thing you’ve done to-day. I do wish you’d come to!”

Thus adjured Mr. King set himself seriously to the task of the moment, and, thanks to his ingenuity, the difficulty of the christening was overcome.

“You see,” he said seriously to the admiring Roddy, “I’m a Baptist, so I think that a christening isn’t a christening unless it’s thoroughly done. It’s generally a pretty mean business, one quart of champagne to a great big man-of-war! But this is no such slouch affair, Rodgers-with-a-d, and don’t you

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forget it! We'll regularly immerse the *Grace Darling* in the foaming, flowing bowl. You just watch—and see!”

So saying he tied one end of his handkerchief around the neck of the bottle, and bidding me, in a whispered aside, to be sure and strike against the stone edge of the basin, himself took charge of the launching. Rodgers, relegated to the position of spectator, stood aside, while Mr. King, kneeling down, held the little craft at the basin's edge. The word was given, smash went the bottle, and beneath a fountain of champagne the *Grace Darling* floated proudly out upon the water. Roddy rent the air with yells of delight, and for a time we all three devoted our entire attention to the sailing of the new toy. Then Mr. King and I, content to be audience, retired to the neighboring bench, and I had an opportunity to ask an explanation of the desire just shown by Mr. Lannion to get me out of the house.

“They are anxious to have me out of the way this morning,” I said. “I wish to go back now and find out why. Have you orders to keep me here, Mr. King?”

“Yes, I have,” was the frank answer, “and I don't mind doing it, because you might as well be here as there—so far as your comfort is concerned.”

“Are strangers coming?” I asked.

Mr. King shook his head. “As far as helping yourself out of this hole,” he said gloomily, “you might as well be here as there. No one at Ornith Farm will do you any more service in that line than I. And may God have mercy on my soul”—he took off his hat, his voice was low and reverent—“as upon the souls of all unwilling sinners.”

A long silence followed this despondent outburst.

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"May I know what is going on at the house, Mr. King?" I asked at last.

"You might as well now," he said dully. "I suppose you heard the carriage drive away?" I nodded. "Aileen Lucas is being taken to town."

"What?" I exclaimed in surprise. "Why, I thought her unable to move."

"She hasn't moved," said Mr. King. "She's being carried, on an especially arranged mattress—or set of springs—or the deuce knows what! I didn't trouble to inquire. The truth is, Lannion had to do something. Lucas was killed in a gambling row over two weeks ago. Yes, of course you're surprised," he continued, as I cried out in amazement, "for she had to be kept in the dark as long as possible."

"But his letters?" I cried. Then remembered her late uneasiness over their cessation.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. King, "she had to be told finally, but Lannion wanted time to see if her father and mother would come forward and take her back. (They cut up rough over her marrying Lucas; she made a runaway match of it.) Letters came yesterday morning. Lannion broke the news to her himself. Her parents came to N'York to meet her. I suppose she'll stand the trip; it may be kill or cure! She was too upset over Lucas's death to see you—but she left good-bye. She's a warm-hearted girl. Henrietta Despard's gone with her, but she'll be back to-morrow."

I sat very still, ashamed of the thoughts that would surge uppermost. For my sympathy was marred by the selfish anxiety that she might talk of me to those who would inquire into my story. Mr. King, watching me closely, read what was passing in my mind and shook his head.

"No use hoping," he said softly. "She's been

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persuaded that it will hurt you later if your present condition becomes known."

"I don't understand," I faltered.

Mr. King colored hotly, then grew very pale. "I hate to tell you," he whispered, "it shows such damnable cunning. And I admired his craft once," he continued, speaking vehemently, although always in low tones. "I stood in awe of his quick brain! I liked him, too. Everybody likes him when he intends that they shall; which is when he wants to have dealings with them, and means to use them for his own advantage. He's got an infernal way of making you feel that you're the most interesting man in the world to him; that it's you, and you alone, upon whom he depends; that it's just you, and you only, whom he feels he can trust. 'You're my real friend,' that manner of his seems to say, 'the other fellows are only side-shows. I'm civil to them because I have to be, but *you*—' Oh, it makes me sick to think of the way I've been persuaded into making an evil ass of myself!"

"Is Delcie coming back?" I asked irrelevantly, a new dread darting into my mind.

"No, she isn't," was the abrupt reply. "And he's fixed her, too—through her love for you, damn him!"

"I beg you to explain," I said gravely. "I think that I ought to know."

Roddy had lifted the *Grace Darling* from the water, and was carrying her to the end of the north path where an under-gardener was at work. Mr. King looked keenly around, then said in a hard, expressionless tone:

"It's just this. It would be wrong to let the shadow of past lunacy darken your future life. It's on the principle of give a dog a bad name—and so forth. This is what has been dinned into the ears

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of Aileen and the colored woman. If they tell, they're mean to you. Sooner than hurt you they'll hold their tongues till doomsday. That's his infernal cunning. He banks on their affection for you. Through it he's safe. Oh, you needn't look at me like that"—his excitement was painful—"I'm not going to keep up the farce any longer. You are just who you say you are. And I can't move hand or foot to help you!"

It was impossible for me to understand why he could not go at once to the police and inform them of my whereabouts. I laid my hand upon his arm.

"If some one would only get word to my friends—or the police!" I whispered tentatively. "It would be quite fair. Mr. Lannion knows that you disapprove of his keeping me here." Mr. King stared at me. I failed to comprehend the expression in his odd, round eyes. "Do they search for me still?" He nodded. "I am not thought dead?" He shook his head slowly. Then he spoke, but so softly that I had difficulty in hearing.

"I went away to make sure—to get to the bottom of the matter," he whispered. "Pinkerton's men are on it. There's a big reward offered. It seems that an old woman——"

"Katie?" I interrupted.

"Yes," he said. "She won't believe but that you were picked up. And Max Errol"—("Ah!" I ejaculated involuntarily)—"has sworn to keep up the search as long as he lives."

I laughed softly, triumphantly; then my breath was caught by a sob.

"Don't laugh," said Mr. King solemnly, "but get down on your knees and pray God to take the matter out of the sleuths' hands and into His own!"

I lifted my tear-blurred eyes to his face in wonder.

"Yes," he went on, speaking with the same suppressed vehemence, "you may think that these men

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are but His instruments. Not so. Not in the case of Rollis Lannion. Unless, by the justice of God, he dies before the detectives learn of your whereabouts——”

He broke off and, rising, walked the length of the open space. Returning he stooped over me and said slowly, “There are times when I think of killing him myself.”

“No, no,” I whispered, in quick protest, “don’t think of anything so horrible! If only you would contrive to let me send word to Max——”

I stopped, for he shook his head.

“I can’t peach,” he said decidedly, “and I haven’t the courage to shoot him. He took me out of the gutter—he’s been a friend to me in his way. If he sees things different from other folks that’s no reason why we, who’ve benefited by it, should go back on him. If only he had left you alone, instead of pouncing upon you like a wild beast!”

For a time neither of us spoke. My momentary belief that help was coming was dying.

“It was you who told Roddy he was a were-wolf?” I asked at last.

“No,” said Mr. King. “What do you mean?”

I told him, listlessly, of the child’s nightmare.

“He must have got that notion from poor Daimeret—owner of the schooner that brought you here,” he went on, in answer to the question in my eyes. “He and Lannion were hand and glove. Lannion was on his way back from Canada, where he’d been on a business trip with Daimeret, when he picked you up. Daimeret came down by rail—business again—while Rollis brought the schooner. Daimeret was a French Canadian, and a good sort. Played with the boy a lot when he was here in the winter.”

“Was?” I inquired. “Was a good sort? Is he dead?”



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"Yes," was the answer. "The storm that followed your arrival—you recollect? Well, it sent him with his schooner and all on board to Davy's Locker."

"Loison!" I exclaimed, distressed. "Poor Loison!"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. King, "you saw her, of course. She was queer. After her husband died she always went by his name, Loison. Dropped her own. She was chock-full of superstitions, too."

"Loup-garou!" I murmured, thinking aloud.

"Like as not," said Mr. King, sinking down beside me as if too weary to stand. "She hated Lannion—I don't know why. He's a powerful brute, God knows, and an ugly one. Yes," he mused, "and his strength used to fascinate me, strength of body and intellect and will. Yes, will power, and a something about him that makes him able to dominate men. Yet he's a flat failure, because he's used his talents——"

He broke off with a short laugh. "Who am I," he said scornfully, "to be counting up the moles in my brother's eyes when my own are so full of beams I can't see straight!"

There came the sound of Roddy's eager foot-fall and the child appeared, happy and excited still.

"Say, you two," he cried, the moment he caught sight of us, "will you come on down to the stables? I want to show my boat to Cooper."

"He's not there," said Mr. King, surveying the child wistfully, as though envying him his light heart. "Better stay here and I'll tell you a story."

"What about?" demanded Roddy.

"About a boy who had dinner-plates for front teeth." Roddy's grin widened. "No, no, I beg your pardon, With-a-d, I really d u do," cried Mr. King, feigning to be in a paroxysm of embarrassment over

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his slip. "It was tombstones I meant to say, tombstones for front teeth—" He broke off with a gasp of horror, his broad babylike face wearing so comical an expression of dismay at his lack of tact, that, in spite of my own miserable thoughts, I joined in Roddy's delighted laughter.

"There you go," said the promoter of our mirth, "a-laughin' your heads off at your elders. Once upon a time some naughty children like you two was eat up by bears, for poking fun at a bald-headed gentleman like myself—I think I hear them growling now!"

"No, you don't," began Roddy; who then held up his hand, enjoining silence. "Hush!" he said, "I heard the gate," and he ran to peep down the path. "It's Uncle Rollis!" he whispered, coming back on tiptoe to deliver this piece of news, "I shall skip." Then, leaning confidentially against Mr. King's knee, he added: "It's not a bear that he looks like, no, sir-ree! But I'm not going to talk about that any more; Pop said I mustn't." And he slipped away down a side path as Mr. Lannion's step was heard close at hand.

Mr. King thrust his hands deep into his pockets, stretched out his legs and, all in a moment, became the picture of lazy contentment.

"Well, Rollis, old man, here you are!" he exclaimed as Mr. Lannion emerged into the hot sunshine. "Come and sit down; we'll make room for you. It's nice in this damp shade."

Mr. Lannion was manifestly well pleased by the heartiness of Mr. King's greeting. It was quite apparent to me that he had not expected to be welcomed, and that he felt relieved by the other's friendly mood. Following the lead, I moved and made room, but I kept beside Mr. King. Seated thus, in the middle of the bench, I was enabled to

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watch both men as they talked together. Mr. Lannion observed me closely. Mr. King spoke again:

"You needn't look to see if she's in a fitting state to hear your news, Rolly," he said with good-natured carelessness, "for I up and told her myself. Hence those traces of tears already dried."

"That was just like you, Tom," said Mr. Lannion; "you're the best fellow in the world, always! I might have known that *you* would stand my friend."

He spoke with a frank heartiness of appreciation that was very flattering. It seemed an outburst of genuine admiration and friendly affection, coming straight from the heart. I glanced at Mr. King, remembering his description of Mr. Lannion's winning manner. How might he be impressed? He withdrew his hand from his pocket and waved it deprecatingly; he did not look at his genial host.

"Don't mention it, Rolly; don't mention it!" he murmured modestly.

Mr. Lannion, apparently satisfied, transferred his entire attention to me.

"They are almost unnoticeable," he said earnestly, "painted white, and of a really graceful shape."

I looked at his anxious face in wonder. Of what was he speaking?

"Many people in the suburbs have them," he continued, "even on their drawing-room windows. You will forget they are there, after a day or two."

"If we might know the subject of this eloquent discourse, Lannion," Mr. King remarked with airy politeness, "doubtless we should (being persons of really elegant manners) now make the fluent and beautiful comments that you evidently (and, Lord knows, very naturally) expect."

"I thought you said that you had told her?" said Mr. Lannion.

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"Not about articles of luxury much prized in suburban villas," was the soft-voiced reply.

"What then?" asked Mr. Lannion, and I knew that it was an effort for him not to speak sharply. "What did you tell the child?"

"I informed the"—Mr. King hesitated—"the—child of Mrs. Lucas's departure."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mr. Lannion, but he said nothing further, and Mr. King, after waiting a moment, sighed deeply and glanced carelessly toward me. I understood this to mean that it was now my turn, and without circumlocution asked a blunt question.

"What is it that you have had done that is so disagreeable, Mr. Lannion?"

He flushed uncomfortably. Then said deprecatingly: "It was because of your objection to Zayma, dear, I had to arrange matters somehow——"

He ceased speaking as if he dared not proceed further.

"Stone walls do not a prison make—nor iron bars a cage," said Mr. King gently.

"Bars?" I cried, springing to my feet and facing Mr. Lannion. "*Bars*—on my windows? Oh, how dare you, how dare you!" I stamped my foot. I was almost beside myself with anger and terror. "Barred in! How horrible! But I will not submit; do you hear me, Mr. Lannion? I will not endure this!"

The two had risen. Mr. King's face was perfectly expressionless; Mr. Lannion's harsh features were set like iron.

"You are thinking of fire," said Mr. Lannion quietly, "but there is no danger. The bars are in a frame which locks—and I have the key. You need feel no alarm."

I felt suddenly very odd and faint. The trees

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began to sway—yet no breeze fanned my cheek. How might I get back to the house?

Mr. King stepped forward and drew my hand beneath his arm.

"If you'll just fetch a glass of wine, Lannion," he said. "I think you can get it here in time."

Mr. Lannion began a remonstrance; he preferred that Mr. King should go, but the latter cut him short.

"We will follow slowly," he said in quiet tones, "but I must help her—since you have chosen to cross the Rubicon."

## XXII

The bars were not placed horizontally across the windows, but up and down, converging to a point at the top. They were painted white and gilded at the edges. Fastened together upon a frame, they swung open when unlocked very much like an inside shutter. And they were far enough apart to admit of one's thrusting hand and arm between them easily, so that the window could be readily opened and closed. But their innocent appearance did nothing to mitigate my horror at being locked in behind them, and I could not bear to stay long in my room.

Because of the absence of Mrs. Despard and Aileen I disliked remaining in the house or upon the veranda, and early in the afternoon I wandered down to the stables to see the horses. Nanny followed close at my heels, but directly she found that Cooper was at liberty to look after me she returned to the house, pleading unfinished tasks.

"I calliate she's 'fraid of her auntie," Cooper remarked mildly, as she hastened away; "and I ain't so sure but what I am, too, I swan I ain't!" He smiled gently, as he made this admission of cowardice. "Zayma's a vixen, Zayma is," he continued thoughtfully, "an' as Mr. King was sayin' only t'other day, she'd ha' been burned as a witch if she'd lived in old times—and Ebenezer along with her. Mr. King," he went on, "has gone off with the grays an' them two gentlemen." (It did not surprise me that Cooper mentioned the horses first.) "Mr. King wanted Nonie and Abbie, but I giv' him the grays.

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Mr. King he said he'd always had to put up with second-best. He must have been a mighty funny minister—are you a Baptist, miss?"

I said that I was not.

"Nor me neither. I'm a Presbyterian, leastways I was when a boy"—his voice became tinged with melancholy—"but there's no use thinkin' about that! Mr. King, as I was sayin'"—dismissing his own past with resolution—"must have been a funny minister. 'I never try to help folks, Cooper,' he says, 'but I do more harm than good. I'd better let them be. When I was in the ministry,' he says, 'I tried to pay out an old cuss who made his daughter's life a hell on earth,' says he, 'an' what come of it?' he says; 'why, I got the sack. It was like this, Cooper,' he says, 'the old man got religion and was all for jinin' the church to wash away his sins. An' he chose the Baptist, I s'pose,' Mr. King says, 'because of his need of a lot of water for the purpose, his sins bein' double-dyed, so to speak,' says Mr. King. It was two weeks before the immersion—that's what Mr. King called it—that Mr. King himself got took with queer attacks, kinder spasms of prayin'. He'd get agoin', he says, and he couldn't seem to let up till he'd prayed out. Have you ever been in one of them Baptist churches?"

I said that I had not.

"Nor me neither," continued Cooper; "but as Mr. King giv' me to understand, there's a big tank with steps leadin' down into it an' up from it, in a room just back of the pulpit. The minister he gets into a kind of rubber suit under his—well, whatever he wears—an' the feller what's going to be immersed wears somethin' loose that ain't water-tight, and into the tank they go. Well, what do you s'pose happened when Mr. King was immersin' that old sinner?"

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"I cannot imagine," I said listlessly, though striving to appear interested.

"'I no sooner got his head well under,' says Mr. King, says he"—Cooper chuckled irreverently—"than I was took with one of them strange attacks of mine. I begun prayin' an' I couldn't seem either to let up on my prayers or to let up that repentant old gentleman. I giv' you my word, Cooper,' says Mr. King, says he, 'the relatives of the old party had to wade in—in their best clothes, too—an' unloose my iron grasp upon his collar! Fact,' says Mr. King, he says, 'however deplorable. But he didn't take cold, Cooper,' he says, 'for the moment he could breathe, his language became that hot that, I giv' you my word, I smelled sulphur, I did indeed.' Mr. King must have been a mighty funny minister."

Cooper stared at me meditatively. "An' he's been, so they say, a variety show artist, too. I'm goin' into the harness room to fetch a saddle. Will you come along? If you don't mind!"

"A side-saddle!" I said, looking on in surprise as he lifted one down. "Why, Cooper, what are you going to do?"

But Cooper's mind was still upon Mr. King. "So he says he ain't never tried to help any one but he let 'em in for a worse time. Th' old man cut up rougher than ever after bein' most drowned; an' Mr. King he got notice to quit, he says, an' had to leave the girl to her fate. Which means, I guess," commented Cooper, standing clutching the saddle in the doorway, "that he was sweet on her, but havin' nothin' to offer had to get out. This saddle?" suddenly remembering my question. "For Ashtie. To be put on every day for two weeks to get her accustomed—when she's to be sold. Mr. Lannion wants to be rid of her. She's eatin' her head off, he says, an' nothin'



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to show for her keep. She tried to eat me some yesterday." He laid down the saddle, and rolling up one of his shirt sleeves, disclosed a wide purple mark upon his upper arm. "Ashtie's teeth," he remarked quietly. "You can most count 'em, she grabbed so tight." He sighed deeply as he drew the sleeve over the bruise. "I don't blame her none," he said, with the tolerance that accompanies resignation to incurable evils. "She's vicious because she was broke wrong. It's the same with Mr. King, I guess. He must have been wrong brought up. He's an awful pleasant man; but he must have been badly broke, or he'd been a minister yet. I'm usin' the side-saddle," he continued, "because she may calliate to rub it off by rollin', an' this was bought second-hand, and anyway ain't needed, no lady wishing to——"

He here remembered that I did wish to ride, and, without finishing his sentence, picked up the saddle again and betook himself to Ashtaroth's box stall. I followed, wondering if Mr. King had endeavored to help me—and increased the difficulties of my position! I did not wonder at Mr. Lannion's breaking his word in regard to selling Ashtaroth.

"She's giv' me no trouble about bridlin' her," Cooper announced, pausing to look at the mare through the bars above her door before entering, "but I just slipped in a snaffle—thought even the feel of a curb might send her off; she's terrible tetchy lately. The hot weather, I guess."

Ashtaroth looked apathetic. She stood very still, her head a-droop, making no movement to rid herself of the bridle, the reins of which were knotted well up out of harm's way.

"She seems quiet enough," I said, observing her closely.

"Can't never tell by looks," was the unhopeful

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answer, and Cooper, unfastening the door, walked quickly to the mare's side.

The stall had two doors; one leading into the stable, the other opening upon the road outside. Before Cooper noticed what I was about, I entered after him, and crossing directly to the outer door, took up my station beside it.

"For Gawd's sake!" he exclaimed, catching sight of me just as he placed the saddle on the mare.

"I'm all right," I cried reassuringly, while I unbolted the door and laid my hand on the knob; "I can dash out in an instant."

Ashtaroth gave no sign of evil temper, submitting to the adjustment of the saddle like a lamb. Cooper began to fasten the first girth warily.

"There she goes!" he ejaculated mournfully, giving a careless tug at the girth. "See her swell herself out! It's a reg'lar trick o' her'n!"

I ran forward and, catching the off-pommel, held the saddle firm. Astaroth made no objection, but as my presence only served to paralyze Cooper, I had to withdraw to my former position and become again a mere spectator by the outer door. The second girth was now fastened as slackly as the first. The saddle was on. Very loosely, it is true, but still it was in place. The third girth, the one that keeps the flaps down, was scarcely buckled by Cooper's limp unwilling fingers, when one of the gardeners appeared at the inner door of the stall. He was extremely angry. Cooper had borrowed his favorite rake without asking permission, and had failed to replace it.

"I calliate I did forgit all about it," Cooper acknowledged meekly, "but I'll get it right now, if you'll come along. It's just 'round the corner of the far stall."

Glancing at me to see if I were really in no danger from the mare's heels, he hurried out and I was left

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in the stall alone. I opened the outer door softly, and taking the mare by the bridle, led her across the threshold. Then I did what, in spite of my early training, I believe would have been at any other time impossible. Laying my hand lightly upon the second pommel, I vaulted into the insecurely girthed saddle, desperation doubling my strength.

In an instant Ashtaroth was off; plunging, rearing, striving furiously to rid herself of her burden. Failing, she started on a flying gallop up the road toward the house. By the time we reached it and rushed past, I knew that I was upon the back of no fear-driven, terror-blind creature, but a practised runaway. And because of this—if the saddle did not turn—I might hope to attain the freedom I sought. The mare would run herself tired. If only I could keep on! She was heading straight for the highway, and the gate at the end of the avenue was closed. Fortunately this was not very high. Ashtaroth took the leap flying and swung around the broad curve into the high road with a skill at which I marvelled. I managed somehow to keep myself and the rapidly loosening saddle in position, and on we sped.

I knew that we should be instantly pursued, and I knew, also, that Nonios was fleetier than the mare. He and Abatos were both in the stable, but they had been out already and were a trifle jaded, while the mare was fresh. And the sound of following hoof-beats would increase her speed. What menaced us were the hills down which we must go. It was easy for me to stick on, and for Ashtaroth to keep up her even gallop, so long as we remained on the level; but the moment we should start upon our downward journey, she might lose her head through inability to check her pace.

As we neared the descent I again strove to gain mastery by my voice, but in vain. And the reins

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were useless, for the mare had taken the bit in her teeth. In another instant she was plunging down hill. What I had feared quickly followed. The levels between the hills were so short as to be almost unnoticeable; mere breathing-places for the up-climbing teams. Ashtaroth realized her danger too late. She tried to check herself and, failing, became crazed with fear, rushing downward like a mad thing. Her quick indrawn gasps of terror, the noise of the stones spurned by her hurrying feet, and the now irregular strokes of her hoofs upon the road, made it impossible for me to hear if we were pursued. Suddenly we rounded a corner—and the end came.

Just in front of us the road flattened. It was one of the resting-places. Here a rough drinking-trough caught the water of a tiny rivulet that else must have rippled across the road. The storm of the previous night had caused the trough to overflow, and the road was wet and muddy. Ashtaroth's feet slipped; she slid for a way, struggling frantically to right herself, then lost her balance—and fell. Keenly on the watch for this—my past training in the ring now serving me in good stead—I managed to spring clear of all danger before she struck the ground. She had crashed flat downward and slid some distance upon her knees from the momentum of her fall. But she was up and away almost instantly, maddened to frenzy by the saddle that, turning as she rose, now hung beneath her belly. Kicking, screaming, she disappeared down the hill. Above the noisy clangor of her crazed descent I heard the sound of hoof-beats coming from the opposite direction. The chase was on!

To my left a low stone wall edged a stretch of rough fields, where many little knolls and up-cropping rocks promised hiding-places. On the other side of the road was a thick wood, in which I might,

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perhaps, escape my pursuers. But once among the trees, I should be out of reach of help from chance travellers on the highway. I chose the fields.

Climbing the wall hastily, and running down the steep incline, I came almost immediately upon a rocky ledge that jutted boldly out along the hillside. Skirting this, I was soon below it and thus screened from view. Here I found a place where, by kneeling upon a flat projecting bit of rock, I could watch the road, myself unseen because of the wild growth in the crevices. I would remain quiet until those who followed passed by, and then, with the highway for a distant guide, I might make my way through the lonely fields to the first farmhouse.

As the flail-like sound of the hoof-beats came nearer and nearer, my heart began to throb in unison. A rider swept around the shoulder of the hill. Mr. Lannion, on Nonios. He had mounted in haste, for he was in his shirt sleeves and the horse was without a saddle. I hoped to see him rush by. Instead, he suddenly pulled Nonios down upon his haunches, dismounted, looked about him curiously, then whistled loud and clear. In almost instant answer to this summons the two Great Danes came bounding along the road, while close behind them a second horseman appeared, Solomon Jasper. Upon reaching his master Jasper also dismounted and stooped low, so that I lost sight of him behind the intervening wall.

I now believed that my hope of escape was futile, since my slippers had probably left telltale marks upon the damp ground. But when Jasper again stood upright, and Mr. Lannion, making a motion toward the distant stretches of high-road visible from where they stood, evidently spoke of the mare, I began to breathe freely, concluding that no traces of my flight into the meadow had been found. The

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dogs, crossing to the trough, drank noisily, thirsty after their quick run. Then Jasper swung himself upon Abatos, Mr. Lannion remounted, my heart stood still. What would they do?

I had not long to wait. Jasper rode on in pursuit of Ashtaroth. Mr. Lannion put Nonios at the low stone wall, leaped it, and entered the field. I was again a captive.

With trembling fingers I began to gather the sweet-smelling bracken that grew between the rocks. I made an attempt to hum a tune, but could not. The two dogs, unwittingly cruel, came scrambling and bounding to my side, whimpering with delight over the chance meeting. And Mr. Lannion, advised of my hiding-place, rode around the ridge and drew up beside my projecting platform. I did not greet him. Instead, I busied myself warding off the playful Osiris, who wished to worry my lapful of ferns. Without raising my eyes I knew that I was being closely inspected.

"Thank Heaven!" Mr. Lannion said at last. "But how you escaped I do not know!"

"I have not escaped," I made answer bitterly. "I am a prisoner still."

Mr. Lannion sighed. "You are very hard upon me, Hope," he said.

I looked at him, and he smiled sadly, as if, in very truth, he felt himself a wronged man. He was haggard, pale in spite of the heat, his rough brown hair was in disorder, and because of his undress he had a wild appearance. But, as always, he looked like a gentleman. Why I disliked him the more for this I did not know. I averted my eyes and began to weave a wreath of my bracken.

"I shall make you each a collar," I announced to the dogs who had crowded down close on either side. "But yours," I said to the encroaching Osiris, who

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insisted upon poking his inquiring nose among the fronds, "will be very ragged if you won't stop being naughty."

Osiris lifted his big head and gently swabbed my cheek with an affectionate but over-moist tongue. His black muzzle was still covered with drops from the drinking-trough. Nonios, believing that my pockets never lacked sugar, now demanded attention. Hermes, resenting an infringement upon what he considered the rights of dogs, growled long and low. I tapped his nose with a waving fern and remonstrated. He laid a huge dun paw on my knee and thumped his tail deprecatingly.

"You old goose!" I said caressingly. "Come, let us sing together!"

"No, no," interposed Mr. Lannion, who had watched the scene with a strangely wistful look; "you must not sing here. And it is time to go home."

"Home!" I echoed scornfully. I sprang to my feet, letting the bracken fall, and began to sing, hoping that I might thus attract attention, should any one be near enough to hear. But Mr. Lannion held up his hand so threateningly, there came into his eyes so terrifying an expression, that my voice died in my throat.

"Listen," he said sternly, "and understand that I mean what I say. If you refuse to come with me willingly, I shall use force. If you persist in singing, I shall find means to silence you. Now, will you come?"

I scanned his strongly marked features earnestly. Was it possible that he would prefer my not yielding? Could it be that, angered by my effort to escape him, he might find a cruel satisfaction in treating me roughly? I laid a hand upon his shoulder to steady myself, and let him lift me down upon the

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horse's back. He placed me in front of him and, holding me carefully, turned Nonios toward the high-road.

The horse bore his double burden bravely, and started up the grassy slope encouraged by Osiris, who circled before us barking. I wondered that Mr. Lannion should choose to return thus openly, and I searched the distances eagerly, hoping still for a miracle to happen. But I quickly realized that my captor knew what he was about, when, after following the wall for a few hundred paces, we came upon a breach through which we passed. Crossing the highway we entered the little forest by a rough track or wood road. Turning off this track in among the trees, Mr. Lannion headed Nonios toward Ornith Farm. His sigh of relief told me how great had been his previous anxiety, and the extent of his satisfaction in having successfully accomplished a dangerous task. I knew also that to a man of his neat methodical ways, it would have been an intense mortification to be seen by any one in so disordered a dress. It was the more curious, I thought, that so precise a person should have behaved as he had in regard to me.

Nonios picked his way between the trees cleverly. His firm tread crushed sweet woodsy odors from moss and fern as he wound in and out. The afternoon was hot in the open; under the trees, where the ground and underbrush were still damp from the late storm, the atmosphere was oppressive, enervating. Suddenly the intense quiet, broken thus far only by the soft thud of the horse's hoofs and the snapping of twigs as the dogs brushed through the thicket, was disturbed by the report of a pistol. I started and looked up anxiously at Mr. Lannion.

"The mare?" I questioned. "She has injured herself?"



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"Perhaps," was the vague response.

I listened. Another report. Then silence. I put my hand on the reins. Nonios came to a halt. I watched Mr. Lannion's face.

"Some boy, squirrel shooting?" I suggested.

Mr. Lannion shook his head. "No," he said composedly, "you guessed correctly at first. I told Jasper to shoot her. She has done harm enough."

My eyes filled with tears. "You are cruel, cruel!" I cried indignantly. "You take pleasure in giving pain!"

"Why blame me? I am not the one in fault?" He looked at me significantly.

I turned my face away, the tears brimmed over.

"Who *would* ride her?" he continued, starting Nonios again. "Who unlocked the stable door? Not I, surely."

"You are right," I faltered. "I am the one to blame. I wish you would tell Jasper to shoot me. I am so tired of it all!"

Of this outburst Mr. Lannion took no notice. Neither did he try to soothe or comfort me. We rode on in silence. Presently, with a reckless disregard of possible consequences, I voiced my thoughts.

"I sometimes wonder," I said wearily, "that you care to keep up the pretence of being in love with me. You never try to make me like you. You thwart me constantly. You say disagreeable, even insolent things. You treat me as a cross child treats its doll. I believe that you are really tired of me, and only go on keeping me here and insisting that you love me, because you are too obstinate to give in, and own up to your mistake."

"I regret that you should think me such a weakling as not to know my own mind," he said stiffly. "And I have not illtreated you in any way. On the contrary, I have done my best to please you. My wonder

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is that I have failed. I generally am liked—when I wish to be.”

As he spoke, we came upon another wall of rough stones. This proved to be the boundary of Ornith Farm. The woods extended, I knew, but a short distance beyond, although the house, with the broad sweep of open land, was still screened from view. Here again the stones of the wall had, in one place, been pulled down, and as we rode through the gap, Mr. Lannion grumbled over the laziness of servants.

“They must always go the shortest way,” he said severely, “and don’t in the least mind destroying other people’s property. If you won’t consider it ‘illtreatment’ on my part, I will ask you to wait a moment while I replace these stones.”

“I would rather be here than at the house,” I said. “It is something to be out of sight of a prison for even an hour’s space.”

Mr. Lannion lifted me from the horse and, after tying Nonios, set to work. I wished to walk about under the trees, but this he forbade.

“If you will kindly stay where I can see you, the work will become play,” he said with mock gallantry.

“Which means,” I commented gravely, as I seated myself on the wall close beside the opening, “that you fear I may make another attempt to run away.”

“Yes,” he said simply, and went on piling up the stones with strong, swift exactitude.

I watched him in silence, thinking that I never could have liked him, even had we met and been thrown together under different circumstances. No, never, although we had many tastes in common; for he was a thorough horseman, and he was fond of music and of a country life. He stopped working and looked at me.

“A penny for your thoughts!” he said gruffly.

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"A whole penny—for a girl's thoughts?" I replied, raising my eyebrows. "They are not worth so much, Mr. Lannion."

"I would give a great many pennies to be able to read yours," he said. "They are worth much to me at present."

A new idea flashed into my mind. Perhaps what I had said but a moment before in mere petulance, was really the truth. Perhaps he was now anxious to send me home, could he do so without injury to himself, and without the mortification of himself suggesting it. But I had tried him past endurance; first by running away, then by rude remarks. He was in a very bad humor, and this would increase his natural obstinacy—his dislike to yielding even to his own better judgment. How might I put him in a good temper? My eyes fell upon the cleverly mended wall.

"How well you have repaired the gap!" I said, striving to make the tones of my voice match my words of praise. "You are wonderfully clever with your hands! I should think you could make them do anything you chose."

My compliment failed to please. Thrusting his hands deep down into his pockets he stood staring at me with suspicion.

"To what do these soft words lead?" he asked coldly. "Are they intended to turn away wrath? I am not angry with you but with myself. I have played the fool too long."

"That is just it!" I cried, slipping off the wall and—in my eagerness—laying my hand upon his arm; "that is just what I wished to speak about!"

"Indeed!" he exclaimed. "I am surprised, but pleased—in spite of the lack of compliment—that you so readily agree with me. Your frankness shall be met with equal openness on my part. I will tell

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you at once the conclusion at which I have arrived——”

“I knew it!” I interrupted, my intense relief making it impossible for me to let him finish his sentence. “I felt sure that you would, sooner or later, realize your”——I hesitated——“your mistake. And it can be easily arranged. I ask no vengeance. I forgive you, yes,” I asseverated, carried away by a very delirium of happiness at thought of the freedom I imagined already mine, “I forgive you from my heart.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Lannion dryly.

He did not share my enthusiasm. This was but natural, I thought, since he probably was fancying that he must face unending disagreeables before getting through with the matter of giving me back. But these he should be spared. I dreaded them as much as he.

“I know of what you are thinking,” I said, smiling up at him, “but I will arrange all that.”

He drew his hands from his pockets and clasping my feverish fingers held them closely. I let them lie. The parting having come, I could afford to give way in trifles.

“You arrange matters,” he said gently; “a little girl like you!”

I met his indulgent smiling eyes gravely. “I must,” I said. “I alone can persuade my people that——” I broke off. This plan seemed suddenly impossible.

“What, a difficulty already?” asked Mr. Lannion.

“Yes,” I said. “What we will have to do is—not to tell the truth. It will be hateful, of course. We must make up some story—that was what I intended to propose. But I find it harder to invent one than I thought.” I looked at him wistfully.

“Come and sit down,” he suggested. We seated

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ourselves upon the wall. "What story do you want made up?"

"Why, just that you had found me, and, in spite of yourself (because of that awful storm, perhaps), had kept me longer than you meant, and—and—" I faltered, stopped speaking, daunted by the mockery in his eyes and smile.

"I am glad to find that you have never been in love," he said quietly. "I suspected it from the first. Now I am sure. You have made me very happy, Hope."

"You mean—oh, it is not possible that you do not mean——"

"I don't mean to give you up," Mr. Lannion interrupted, "if that is what you wish to know. A truce to all this nonsense." He rose as he spoke, and placing himself directly in front of me, delivered his ultimatum. "I was a fool not to marry you at once. I shall do so now. I shall send for a man who will be obliged to marry us, even if you state your unwillingness to go through with the ceremony. Should you consider it your duty to omit making the responses, he will give me a proper certificate just the same."

Stunned by his words I sat silent. What should I do? He seated himself beside me, slipped his arm around me, took my hand in his. Then bent his head—his face came close, close to mine. I found my voice.

"Ah!" I gasped, shrinking from him, "*Loup-garou!*"

He started, his purpose unaccomplished. I tore my hands from his and sprang aside. He strode toward me, frowning.

"Never call me that again," he said menacingly. "Such epithets would sound ill from the lips of my wife."

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"I shall not marry you," I said firmly. "You know that I am already engaged."

"To a man you do not love," he replied quickly.

I laughed a little. I had recovered my courage.

"A truce to nonsense, as you wisely observed a moment since, Mr. Lannion." Then looking at him earnestly I said, very gravely: "It is time that you should be told that I love Max Errol—with all my heart."

I colored hotly as I spoke; but my heart swelled with pride, with devotion to Max. Mr. Lannion shook his head, smiling. His moment of anger was over.

"I doubt if your love is strong enough to endure any severe test," he said good-temperedly. "But you may not realize how matters stand—although you are such a wise little woman. You may not be aware that should you succeed in an attempt to leave me, I should follow you. And I should, most assuredly, make it impossible for Mr. Errol to rejoice over your return."

"You would—you would—" I faltered, broke down.

"I would shoot him," was the composed reply, "and then, I suppose, myself."

We were both silent for a long moment. Then Mr. Lannion spoke again.

"If you get away, Hope, it will be because I am unable to catch up with you in time—as I have just done. Should that happen, my chances for anything would be about over. So I should make the best of bad fortune by removing Max Errol, along with myself, from this world. If you want him to live, you had better stay with me. I'm not such a—well, such a wolf, as you would make out. Honestly, I will try to make you happy."

He held out his hand to me. I did not lay mine

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in it. At last I asked a question. My voice sounded odd and dull.

"Is—what you have done—punishable—by law?"

"Very much so," he said curtly. "A bullet would be less bitter medicine. But Max Errol, I promise you, shall go shares with me. I'll drink my last cup with him."

"I feel rather—rather tired," I said faintly. "If you please I am ready to—to go."

Uttering an exclamation of alarm, Mr. Lannion sprang forward and caught me in his arms.

"No, no," I insisted, as he begged me to sit down and rest for a moment; "put me on Nonios and take me—take me—" A flood of tears stopped my speech. I could not force myself to say "home."

With anxious haste Mr. Lannion obeyed, and I was soon behind the white bars of my room—again a prisoner at Ornith Farm.

### XXIII

Although fully believing that Mr. Lannion's threat was no empty one, and that he would at once send for the man who was to marry us, yet because of my buoyant temperament my despair did not last long. Before I had made a fresh toilet—my pretty summer frock had been sadly marred by my wild ride—I thought I had lost courage too soon. Mrs. Despard and Mr. King would never stand by and allow Mr. Lannion to carry out this last evil purpose. I would tell Mr. King at once, I thought. He would interfere thus far in my behalf, surely. As for what Mr. Lannion had said in regard to Max—time enough to think of that when I had seen and consulted Mr. King.

Just before supper, hearing a slight noise in the hall, I opened the door and looked out. It was Roddy, apparently absorbed in perfecting himself in his latest study—that of walking upon his hands. I suspected that he was really waiting for me. Of this I became certain when, feigning not to notice me, he made his unsteady way into his own little room, and dropped down upon the floor with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Bravo, Roddy!" I cried with assumed gayety; "you'll be walking the tight-rope next," and I entered after him.

His room was a middle one, between the two corner rooms occupied respectively by Dr. and Mrs. Despard. Over his bed hung the picture in which he delighted—Grace Darling rowing her boat



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through the surf. He scrambled up and going to the window leaned out.

"Golly, but it's hot!" he exclaimed, then turned and smiled at me. His eyes were very red. He had been crying.

The doors communicating with the rooms on either side were closed. I knew that the child had something to confide. I looked about me, pretending not to have seen the signs of tears, but to be interested in the room. Roddy went to his small bookcase and selecting a book brought it to me. It was a handsome copy of "Tanglewood Tales."

"From Tom King," said the child in faltering accents. "He's gone—for good."

Turning his back he looked out of the window, visibly struggling not to cry again. I sank into a chair; robbed of my strength by this sudden withdrawal of my chief dependence.

"Open carefully," continued Roddy, lowering his voice. "It's in 'The Pomegranate Seeds'—read it quick! Uncle Rollis has ridden off to telegraph something. I heard him tell Pop so. Pop's on the piazza. To be read by you, Tom said; till then, my 'trust.' Won't you please hurry!"

I did as he wished. I soon found a sheet of closely written note-paper. On one of the pages between which it lay these words had been heavily underlined with pencil:

"Wherever she set her blessed foot, there was at once a dewy flower. The violets gushed up along the wayside."

The choice of the story in which the paper was placed, told me that Mr. King had discovered Mr. Lannion's fond conceit in regard to the ancient myth. What Mr. King had written was very strange. It ran as follows:

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"Yes, 'a dewy flower'! A flower of encouragement, bidding men earn their bread by the sweat of the brow, rather than by the easy cheating of their fellows.

"Yes, 'a dewy flower'! A flower fragrant with the sweet faith of a young girl's soul—pure, free from taint of evil.

"The violets gushed up along the wayside.' Yes, violets of deep affection from the heart of a brave child. Blossoms of wholesome respect in the breast of a callous, world-worn woman. The first returning bloom of a humble belief in God's justice, in the long bedimmed soul of me—a sinner.

"But 'As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse *causeless*—shall not come.'

"I have sinned, and the hand of the Most High is heavy upon me.

"In my folly I believed I knew well what awaited me—should my sin be found out. Not so. For who may foretell the judgments of God? He ordains that for my punishment I must stand passive in the torture chamber where, on the rack, lies Innocence, bound hand and foot.

"I go to prepare my grave. With plowshare and harrow, with rake and spade will I make it ready. May it please God to shorten this task and, because of my great misery, may it please Him to let me lie down in my grave full soon. My petty, wretched body, is weary of His glorious world.

"Farewell forever to all happiness; farewell to—Hope."

Roddy watched me eagerly as I folded the sheet and put it in my pocket. He nodded his head violently, winking away the tears.

"Yes," he said, in earnest confirmation of what he fancied I had just read, "gone for good—hired

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out, to work on a farm. Tom! Yes, said his hands were dirty (for all they looked clean), said the stain had worked in under the skin. Said he'd heard there was nothin' like farm tools for blistering such dirt out, and that old Mother Earth had washed off many a man's stained hands before." The child laughed unsteadily. "Tom's always so funny!" he added, looking wistfully at me.

"Do you know where he has gone, Roddy!" I asked. Taking the boy's hand in mine I drew him close.

"No," he whispered, while I felt his arm steal around my neck, "but I think I know why he went away. It was 'cause of a row with Pop and mother, in the dining-room after breakfast one morning not long ago, when Uncle Rollis and those other two chaps had gone out, and mother stayed to pour out Pop's coffee—Pop came down late—and I stayed 'cause Tom stayed." Roddy stopped for breath and to collect his ideas. "Tom and mother got talking about you," he continued, "an' both got mad. I know they were awful mad for mother got redder every minute, and Tom's voice got softer an' slower every word he said—you know that's Tom's way. Mother said you were real sweet an' she thought a lot of you, but she wondered at Uncle Rollis bein' so wild about you. She said she wouldn't have believed a girl goin' on eighteen could be so ridiculous ignorant; said if she was a man she'd want a girl with more snap; said that you were lovely, and she liked you ever so much, but you really didn't know beans."

Roddy broke off, staring at me, his brow puckered with doubt. "It's not mean of me to tell, is it?" he inquired anxiously. "Mother spoke right out. She wasn't talking secrets."

I shook my head, although I felt uncomfortable

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in doing so. It was necessary for me to hear all I could.

"Mother said you didn't know beans," Roddy went on, reassured, "and Tom said that he had heard beans were unwholesome, and that *he* didn't care any more for beans than some folks did for sour grapes. It was then that mother got mad. She said she didn't know what he meant by alludin' to sour grapes, but that if he looked to find a married lady, which was a wife an' mother, as ignorant as a half-baked big-eyed baby in her 'teens— Then," said Roddy, "Tom interrupted. It's rude to interrupt, but Tom," he spoke apologetically, striving to defend his absent friend, "Tom was awful mad. I knew he was because of his soft way of speaking, and he was awful white, too. Mother, she was red mad; Tom, white mad. I wonder which is the maddest?"

I said that I did not know. Roddy sighed.

"Well, anyway," he continued, "Tom interrupted. He said that it hadn't entered his head, nor would it ever enter any man's head, to compare Miss Carmichael—" Roddy paused, sighed again. "Then Pop interrupted. He said something awful, Pop did." The child glanced toward the door. "Hush! Listen!" he whispered. "Pop said, 'Oh, damn it, Tom, for God's sake, stop!' And Tom he looked at Pop a minute, then he kinder laughed. 'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Luther Despard,' he said, turning to mother, 'but you misunderstood my allusion to sour grapes. I only wanted to quote from Scripture, which says: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Your teeth are good sized, Rodgers-with-a-d,' says Tom. But Pop let go his coffee-cup. Down it went kersmash, and I—I," faltered Roddy, "I felt kinder scared, and," shamefacedly, "I ran away."

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I stroked the child's hand caressingly. I was so sorry for him, so very, very sorry.

"Yesterday was an awful day," he recommenced, evidently finding solace in pouring out his overcharged heart, "but to-day's been awfuller, though it began so all right. First there was Aileen going for good, and then—Tom. He went right after lunch. He called me away up into his room"—Roddy nodded toward the ceiling, indicating the third story—"and there we said good-bye. I stayed up there after he left—thought I might as well—" (he did not care to confide that he remained there to conceal his tears over the parting)—"and then I heard a rush. I ran to the window and there you were on Ashtie flyin' down the road. The same minute Uncle Rollis burst out of the next room and went downstairs as if he was crazy. I prayed to God to make him tumble an' break his neck, and to let you get off scot-free——"

Roddy eyed me strangely for a moment, then he said earnestly: "I hoped that Pop hoped what I did. He ran in to where I was, and we watched from the window together. He didn't say anything, and I didn't dare speak. I felt awful queer here"—he pressed my hand against his heart—"all swelled. Choky, too, in my throat. Then Uncle Rollis dashed out on Nonios, and after him Solomon on Abatos, with Ossie and Hermie at his heels. By and by, when I was most dead waiting, the dogs came leaping out of the woods below. Then back they ran, and in and out, in and out, till I was crazy with scare. I fidgeted awful, and Pop told me not to worry, I'd soon have you back again. He said he'd always heard that there was nothing so exciting as a man hunt, and he guessed my Uncle Rollis had found it so. And then——"

The child ceased speaking, buried his face on my

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shoulder, clinging tightly to me as though fighting down some pain. I kissed him gently and strove to change the trend of his thoughts.

"There must be a beautiful view from the upper windows," I said quietly. "I have never been in the third story."

"Nor me neither till to-day," was the smothered reply. "I'm never allowed up. Glad of it, too! Nasty old house. I hate it all. Wish you and me could go off together—just you and me!"

"Can you see over the trees near the house?" I inquired.

"Yes, 'most everywhere." He lifted his head but averted his face as he answered me. "Pop says it's a grand view. There's no danger of entertaining angels unawares here, Pop says. What did he mean by that, do you s'pose? Why, look! there's that hateful old Ebenezer skulking 'round the hall."

Roddy ran quickly to the door. "Scat!" he cried shrilly, while he performed a sort of no-admission war-dance on the threshold. "Scat, you old beast!" Slamming the door vengefully, he returned to me. "I won't have any hideous old familiars loping 'round where you are," he said firmly.

"Familiars, Roddy?" I said, wondering to hear the child use the term.

"Yes, that's what Tom King says he is. A familiar, Zayma's. She's prowling on the back staircase now; I saw her topknot as she opened the door opposite and peeked out. A good beast can't be a familiar, Tom says; won't consent to be one. And only bad people want 'em—so it's all right. Ebenezer is Zayma's familiar and"—he lowered his voice to a whisper—"Malvina was Uncle Rollis's! Tom didn't say so. I guessed it. And Tom says," continued the child, glancing fondly from me to the picture he loved and back again, "Tom says that

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some people believe the same souls are used over and over, and perhaps the soul that was once Grace Darling's is yours now. She saved lives, Tom says, and you save souls. That's all the difference, Tom says. Will you have your supper with me to-night? Please do! It's time to go downstairs now."

## XXIV

The hated bars brought what had heretofore been denied me—solitude. I sat by my window late, late into the night, thinking. For the gravity of my position had become extreme, and Mrs. Despard alone remained as a possible ally. I wondered if she had written the letter I had begged her to send to my family. If so, it had never reached them. Then came the terrifying thought that she might remain away until after the wretched creature, Mr. Lannion's tool, had arrived at Ornith Farm. I sprang to my feet and paced the floor in a very anguish of dread. So the night passed.

Shortly after dawn—it was Sunday morning—the house was in a state of unwonted commotion. Presently I became aware that the hurrying footsteps always came from, or ended at, Dr. Despard's door. When Nanny tapped to ask if I were ready for her, she told me that Dr. Despard had had one of his attacks. He was better, but very weak. Nanny added that she was thankful Mis' Despard was to be home by noon, since she, Nanny, was "mos' scairt ter death ter nurse folks!"

I found poor Roddy equally anxious for his mother's return. The child begged me so earnestly to go in with him to see his father that I could not refuse, although I felt sure that I should be unwelcome. Mr. Lannion was seated by his friend's bedside when we entered. He rose, and coming quickly to meet me, stooped and kissed my cheek before I, not suspecting his intention, had time to turn away. Because of Dr. Despard I did not cry



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out, controlling with a great effort my alarm and displeasure. The next moment Mr. Lannion placed me in the chair he had just vacated, and left the room, saying that he had matters of importance to attend to.

"I don't grudge her to you, Luther," he added, smiling at us affectionately from the doorway, "though I own I would to any one else. She will do you more good than any medicine—my sunny little girl!"

I looked at Dr. Despard as the door closed, but he had shut his eyes, and it was impossible for me to know how Mr. Lannion's extraordinary behavior had impressed him. His face, always white, showed ghastly gray against the pillow. I doubted if he had long to live. Presently he opened his eyes, and fixing them upon me thanked me, in a weak voice, for honoring him with my company. He looked so desperately ill that my heart was suddenly wrung with pity. Forgetting my previous bitter dislike, I asked impulsively if there were not something I could do to make him more comfortable. Should I read to him? Or, perhaps, if he had had a bad night, I might sing him to sleep. I would sing very, very, softly—might I try?

A faint gleam of pleasure lighted up his face as he murmured a grateful assent to this last suggestion. We were quite alone, since Roddy, too, had left the room. A cool, green twilight—subdued, grateful to tired eyes—filled the large apartment. I began to sing softly, very softly, as to a little child. I sang drowsy cradle songs; the lullabies of many nations; but all alike in their swinging rhythm, for the rhythm of a rocking cradle is everywhere the same.

Soon, forgetting time and place, the sick man, everything save the songs, and the pictures they

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evoked as I sang; remembering only the need of singing softly, soothingly—soon I drifted into the chants of our church and low-toned, plaintive hymns. I leaned my head against the back of my chair, and, while crooning softly, very softly, I myself fell fast asleep.

My sleep was the dreamless sleep of exhaustion, and it had lasted for fully an hour, when I was awakened by the sound of a carriage rolling briskly up the avenue. For a moment I did not know where I was, and, sitting erect, I stared in wonder about the unfamiliar, dimly lighted room, with its pungent odor of medicines. Then I remembered, and looked at the sick man, pleased to find that he still slept.

I felt less hardly toward Dr. Despard, somehow. I asked myself if I had not condemned him too quickly. He might really think that I was mentally unbalanced. Doctors had made grave mistakes before; why not in my case?

As this fear of having been unjust crossed my mind, I heard Mrs. Despard's voice. She was evidently mounting the staircase, for the sound grew louder each moment, and as evidently venting her displeasure upon some one who remained below. Roused by the shrill noise, Dr. Despard opened his eyes and, seeing me, smiled.

"I have had a refreshing sleep," he said; "it has strengthened me wonderfully. I thank you."

Going to his side I asked to be of further use. He let me slip another pillow beneath his head, and said that he would take his medicine. As I gave it to him the door opened and Mrs. Despard bounced in. She looked overheated, angry, and self-absorbed. Her exuberant presence seemed to change the very atmosphere of the sick-room; it was as if a glaring light had been roughly admitted. Her toilet was

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as aggressive as her manner. She wore a travelling suit of large black and white check, and on the back of her head was pinned an enormous black hat, a-tremble with black and white ostrich tips. Before greeting either of us she halted in the doorway and sniffed loudly, disapprovingly.

"My!" she exclaimed, "no wonder you're sick. This room fairly reeks of drugs!" Bustling to the nearest window she flung it wide, then advancing to the bed stared at her husband. "Rollis Lannion said you was at the point of death, but he's such a liar I didn't believe him. Why, you look first-rate, Loo Despard! You're all right, ain't you?"

"Yes, yes, Henrietta," Dr. Despard replied quickly. "The attack was sharp—but you know they never last long. I only need a day or two of rest. How did Aileen bear the journey?"

"She's fixed all right," said Mrs. Despard, "an' I'll give you particulars later. What I want to say right now is that I won't stand bein' treated like I'm treated by Rollis Lannion! No, not another minute. Which he's had the impudence to confiscate an' hold back letters—my private letters! And I won't stand it, Loo Despard, an' if you sit by an' see your own wife so insulted, why, you'll be too mean-spirited to live. And he says you know of it, too, which I'll never believe, no never, till your own lips say it and not then. And it was the letter wrote to pleasure you," she continued, transferring her attention from her husband to me, while he strove in vain to interrupt her angry torrent of words. "And no wonder you wish to go elsewhere, an' to see some decent folks. Yes, an' I was s'prised, so I was, that Mrs. Carmichael and Mr. Errol didn't come at once to see a poor, half-crazed young creature which thought herself their niece. Which they will

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do, too"—her voice rose higher and higher—"before I'm many days older, for I'll post it myself instead of trusting it to any young jackanapes like that young thing-um-bob—I forget his name, but I met him at the station in N'York, as I was comin' out this morning (and I'm glad the two are gone, not a word to say neither one of them, an' here a week goin' on two), and I asked about my letter, bein' struck with a thought, an' he said as he had give it to Lannion to post. Yes," Mrs. Despard stopped for a fleeting instant to take breath, "yes"—she lowered her voice and spoke very slowly—"yes, he has robbed the mail, Rollis Lannion has, but it won't do him no good—which I'm goin' to write again. Or, no," she looked at me with sudden kindness, "I won't trust no letter, child. I'll telegraph—and you shall have your innocent pleasure spite of all the Rollis Lannions in the world!"

As she ceased speaking the door was gently opened and Mr. Lannion entered. He carried a cup of coffee.

"I did not knock," he said pleasantly, "for I knew that you must be awake, and in need of something to strengthen you." He glanced significantly at Mrs. Despard. "Come, little nurse"—he smiled at me—"you shall coax your patient to drink this. A man would consent to swallow poison if this child offered it, wouldn't he, Despard?"

I did not move. Mrs. Despard, her color deepening, laid a protecting hand upon my arm, and rushed into speech.

"Perhaps you'll repeat what you said about that letter which you took—yes, *stole*," she said determinately, "here before my husband. Which you said——"

"Yes, yes, Henrietta," Dr. Despard interrupted; "I beg that you will spare me a second tirade. I

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do know about that unwise communication. I am glad that it found its way into my hands."

"What?" gasped Mrs. Despard, apparently unwilling to credit her ears. "Do you mean to say that you—my own husband—took—kep' back—destroyed, perhaps——"

"Yes, I did destroy it," the doctor broke in impatiently. "It was a most imprudent document. And I wonder, Henrietta, at your obstinate persistence in meddling with what does not in the least concern you. I must beg you in future to allow me, and Mr. Lannion, to manage our affairs as we see fit." His voice trailed away weakly, he looked exhausted, unfit for further speech.

Mrs. Despard's high color had died away. She had become almost as pale as her husband. She took my hand in hers and, after a moment spoke. Her voice was very low, as if borne down by a weight of new thoughts, of new ideas. Ideas—so it seemed—that she could not as yet quite grasp.

"Do you mean," she asked, speaking slowly, as though forming the words had suddenly become difficult, "do you mean that, after this, my letters are to be examined into? Do you mean that I'm to be kep' watch on—like this poor girl here?"

Her husband moved impatiently. "Don't talk like a third-rate tragedy queen, Henrietta!" he said. "Of course, if you insist upon behaving like a person devoid of sense, you're not to be trusted—that is all."

Mrs. Despard laughed; an odd, nervous laugh. I hated to hear it. She tossed her head defiantly.

"Which if *you* ain't square," she cried, "I am. So I give you warning. I mean to make it my business to see fair play in this house. I mean to make it my business to take care of this unfortunate girl. I mean to tell everybody, yes, every human soul

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which I know, of her bein' confined here against her will. I mean to make it my business to see her kep' in some first-class 'sylum—like as not adopted by those kind folks the Carmichaels and Errols. I mean——”

But Mr. Lannion, stepping forward, caught my hand from hers and placed himself between us.

“Your husband wishes a few words with you in private,” he said firmly. “You and I are not wanted, Aimée.” And he swept me into the hall, closing the door behind us. “I beg your pardon for having subjected you to the companionship of that loud-voiced virago,” he said, directly we were outside. “I seem to have made mistakes all along the line. No, don't shut yourself up in that hot little hole”—I had turned toward my room—“come downstairs with me. It is cool in the library, and I have something to show you.” I shook my head, retreating as he advanced. “Is it because I kissed you that you won't come?” he asked. “It was a very *bourgeois* thing to do, I admit, but poor Luther does not understand nice distinctions of manner.”

“You kissed me, knowing that I would not make a scene, to prove to him——”

“Yes, that was it,” he interrupted quickly. “I wanted him to know that everything was settled. I felt certain that I might count upon your taking it quietly.” (I thought of what Mr. King had said of Mr. Lannion's knowledge of people.) “I want to show you a miniature of my mother. I won't transgress again. I give you my word.”

But I went on into my room and softly locked the door. Mrs. Despard would come to me, I thought, very soon. Hour after hour passed, however, and she failed to appear. At first this frightened me, then I realized that she might be trying to outwit Mr. Lannion and her husband by pretended submission.

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When four o'clock struck and she had not come I felt sure that this was the case, and I became very hopeful. She might already have managed to send the promised telegram—enlisting Cooper's aid before Mr. Lannion had thought of giving him new instructions.

At five there came the sound of footsteps, hastening across the hall and down the staircase. Then I was startled by hearing a carriage drive rapidly away. I looked out into the hall. Mrs. Despard's door stood wide. I ran quickly and looked into the room. She was not there. On the bed, upon the lounge and chairs, were garments neatly folded. Side by side with the frocks of glaring hues were Roddy's childish suits of serge and linen. I opened the door leading into his room. The little bookcase was empty, its books packed away in a box upon the floor. The picture of Grace Darling had disappeared. I went to the doctor's room. The door was ajar. I glanced in. There was no one there.

Frightened, feeling that I must know if what I dreaded could be true, I ran downstairs. Mr. Lannion saw me. He was writing at the table in the library. I stood for a moment on the threshold, hesitating, then entered. He did not rise, but smiled a welcome, holding out his hand.

"You have been shut up in your room a long time," he said. "I hope you have been asleep."

"I am looking for Mrs. Despard," I said breathlessly. "Where is she, please?"

Mr. Lannion frowned. "Gone," he said curtly, "deserted her post! Yes, you may well look astonished"—he spoke severely—"even I wouldn't have believed it of her. She has left her husband; taken the boy and gone home. Luther is horribly cut up over it"—he rose and, going quickly to the door, closed it—"but he does not say much. He had Jas-

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per dress him and help him down on the veranda. Don't let him know that I've told you the real state of the case."

"She is not coming back?" I faltered—yet I felt that he was speaking the truth.

"No," said Mr. Lannion. "She has gone back to her old home—I pity her relations! She's a worthless woman. She has ruined Luther's career. If he hadn't married her he might have turned over a new leaf—he was pretty gay at one time—and made something of his life. I dread to-night," he added after a moment. "I fear that the poor old chap will have another of his attacks, this has upset him so."

Mr. Lannion roamed restlessly about the room; then came back to where I still stood, too dazed by what I had just heard to move.

"Luther doesn't sleep," he said. "I've been trying to get him to change his room. His is so infernally light in the morning—he wakes with the birds. It's east, you know."

"Yes," I assented dully.

"I want him to take Aileen's, but he won't because of its northern exposure."

"No?" I murmured. I moved toward the door.

"If he would only take mine," pursued Mr. Lannion. "It is south-west; both cool and dark in the morning."

"Yes, it would be best," I agreed, hardly knowing that I spoke at all.

"I wish I had some one upon whom I could depend," mused Mr. Lannion, his hand upon the knob. He sighed. "Zayma and Nanny are no good. I wish that his wife had stayed. You are the only competent nurse in the house, but you are out of the question." Again he sighed.

"Why did Mrs. Despard go?" I asked.



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"She objected to what her husband felt obliged to tell her. It did not concern you, or your affairs," he added hastily; "it was a private family matter; I give you my word. I would have been glad to have her go but for Luther's condition. As it is——"

He stopped speaking and looked at me.

"If he is ill I will do what I can," I said.

"No, no," was the quick response, "I could not ask that of you."

"If he is ill," I reiterated, beginning to climb the staircase with leaden feet, "please call me. I will do what I can," and I made my slow way back into my room.

I heard the door of the back staircase—it was between the rooms occupied by Aileen and Mr. Lannion—close softly as I passed. Some one had been on the watch for me. Upon my bed I found a clumsily wrapped package. Within was Roddy's cherished picture—Grace Darling in her life-boat. Tucked into the frame was a folded paper with these lines written in Roddy's big, childish hand:

"MY DEAR HOPE:

"Mother and I are going away. Except Grace Darling with my love. They will not let me say good-bye. Father will take care of you. I asked him to.

"Your loving freind,

"L. ROGERS DESPARD."

He had left out the d.

## XXV

Roddy's letter of childish encouragement served, for a moment, to dispel the dread that had weighted down my heart. Mrs. Despard could not now be curbed in her wish to aid me. Then came the bitter remembrance that Mr. Lannion knew of her plans. And what if the expected clergyman should arrive before help came? The carriage that had taken Mrs. Despard to the station might bring him back. I rang for Nanny. I must know at once.

But Nanny gave me her solemn assurance that no one was expected that night. At my urgent request she went downstairs and asked Zayma, returning with the same answer. No one was coming that night to Ornith Farm. I had hardly dismissed her when she reappeared, this time the bearer of a message from Mr. Lannion. Would I honor him by taking supper in the dining-room? He would else be quite alone.

I was careful that my refusal should be civilly worded. I did not wish to irritate him. In a few hours Max might come! And with each hour my excitement increased. Although I went to bed at the usual time, I got up and dressed again the moment Nanny left me. I wanted to be ready.

It was a very lovely evening. A breeze had sprung up from the south-west. Mingled with the delicate fragrance that it had gathered from dew-wet grasses and flowers, was there—or did I imagine it—the faintest scent of the sea? In my state of feverish suspense this almost imperceptible tang of salt was as a message from distant friends. But were they

## THE PRISONER OF ORNITH FARM

distant? I listened eagerly. Each far-away echo of horses' hoofs set my heart beating; every gentle sound of the night, the movement of wakeful bird, or whirl of belated insect, made me start. At any moment they might come!

I knew that Mr. Lannion must be in the library, since there was silence on the veranda. Twelve o'clock, and he was still downstairs. Then I lost count of the hours, drowsing, in uneasy fashion, in my chair. From one of these short naps I was at last thoroughly awakened by a low, yet persistent, tapping at my door. Instead of answering I instinctively held myself very still, fearful lest an unconscious movement might betray my wakefulness.

"Hope, Hope! Are you awake?"

It was Mr. Lannion's voice. I scarcely dared breathe, so anxious was I that he should believe me to be asleep. I felt as though I could not force myself to answer—even had he come for help, even were Dr. Despard very ill.

"Hope!" he cried again softly, "Hope!" and once more he tapped gently, but urgently, upon the panel.

I could no longer remain silent. I crept softly to my bedside, that my voice might come from the proper quarter, then spoke.

"Oh, Nanny!" I murmured drowsily, fretfully, "do go away. It's not time to get up."

"I am so sorry to disturb you," was the low-toned response, "but I must. Dr. Despard is ill—you promised to help me."

In spite of shame at my cowardice I pretended not to understand. Again I feigned to believe that it was Nanny who strove to rouse me.

"No, no," I said peevishly, "it's not time. I'm so tired—*do* go away—*do* leave me alone!"

Mr. Lannion knocked impatiently. "Hope, Hope!" he said, and he raised his voice. "You will

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have to get up. I need you. Please hurry. The doctor has a bad attack—do you understand?"

It was impossible to affect longer the stupidity of one just aroused, yet I was unwilling to give the aid I had freely offered so short a time before. I was unable to understand my own reluctance, and, conquering it, I had begun to say that I was awake and would come at once, when an exclamation from Mr. Lannion caused me to stop short.

"You, Luther!" he ejaculated under his breath. "Why, I thought you were sound——"

He broke off, remembering, as it seemed, what he had just said to me.

"I thought I would wait until later before taking it," said Dr. Despard. "I hoped that I might sleep without it. Why are you waking Miss Darling, Rollis?"

"Dray has come," was the reply. He spoke in a whisper. I heard only because I had crept to the door to listen.

"What of that?" asked the doctor sharply, making no effort to lower his voice.

"I thought it had better be done at once," Mr. Lannion said; "you know there is no time to lose. It need not trouble you, Luther. Jasper and Zayma can act as——"

"Yes, and have the girl in hysterics," said Dr. Despard. "You know she dislikes them both. Wait until morning, Rollis. In the morning——"

"No, no," Mr. Lannion interrupted, but he spoke in so low a tone that I lost what he said.

I crouched down upon the floor and placed my ear close to the crack beneath the door. Dr. Despard spoke again.

"In the early, early morning I shall be ready," he said. "Before five—I will be witness."

There was silence. Although the night was warm

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there was a chill upon me as of death. What was coming? Mr. Lannion was talking, but it was impossible for me to catch his words.

"I will use your room, yes, since you insist," said Dr. Despard at last, "and I will take something to give me a few hours' sleep. If I am not on hand by five you need not wait for me, of course. As you say—there is no time to lose."

As he finished speaking I rose and withdrew from the door, for I knew that Mr. Lannion would wish to discover whether he had waked me, or if I still slept. I heard him approach stealthily, and knew that he was listening. I sighed, then strove to breathe with the steady regularity of one who, aroused unwillingly, sinks again into profound slumber.

Shortly after there followed a subdued commotion. Dr. Despard was being installed for the remainder of the night in Mr. Lannion's room. I knew that the latter counted upon the invalid's sleeping late. But that did not matter to me. Nothing mattered, indeed, for the end had come.

I heard Mr. Lannion and the new arrival go out upon the veranda. Soon the scent of tobacco floated upward, and the sound of low-toned conversation. I went to the table and felt about carefully until I found my work-basket. From it I took a penknife, a dainty pearl-handled thing. It had but one blade. This was, however, sufficiently sharp for my purpose. Then, moving very cautiously, that no hasty touch should cause me in the dusk to knock over some noisy trifle, I regained my chair by the window, and once again looked upward through the bars.

I felt very odd. The knowledge of what I had to do seemed to cloud my senses. The horror of it dulled my brain. I dared not think of heaven. This last act of my life might bar my entrance there. Yet God's justice was great, His mercy endured for-

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ever! I repeated the Lord's Prayer, but by rote, childishly, even stupidly. Then, opening the pen-knife, I pressed its blade tentatively against the veins of my wrist. At its touch a violent shudder shook me from head to foot. I withdrew it quickly. I must wait a moment. I would count—how much should I count? I fell to choosing a number, idly, foolishly. My mind was strangely inclined to turn to, to play with, little things. I found it difficult to decide this question of the number I should count before cutting——

The clock in the hall below began to strike the hour. I tried to number the strokes but failed, my thoughts drifting away when I strove to concentrate my attention upon the repeated sound.

Seven, yes, seven should be my number! Seven, to match the sevens in the frieze. I placed the blade carefully. One—two—three——

I stopped counting. I sat like a stone. A hand had been thrust through the bars of the other window. Mr. Lannion was below. Had the rescuers come?

"Hope!" The merest whisper, but I knew the voice.

Still holding the knife I went quickly to the window. Dr. Despard peered in at me, his finger on his lips. He was but half dressed, wearing neither coat nor vest, and I saw that his feet were bare. Without speaking he handed me a key, the key that unfastened the bars. Closing my knife I slipped it into my pocket, then, with painstaking care, put the key into the lock, dreading lest by clumsiness I lose all. But the bars swung open noiselessly. Dr. Despard took my hand and, pointing downward to signify that I must use great caution, motioned me to step out upon the roof. In another instant I stood beside him—under the open sky.

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Although he was barefoot and I without shoes, I realized that it would be more than difficult to move silently. Should the roof creak even a little Mr. Lannion or his companion must hear us. Dr. Despard, still holding my hand in his, began to make his slow way toward the window of Mr. Lannion's room. We kept close, close to the wall of the house, our backs almost touching it, and inch by inch crawled toward our goal.

I thank God that I never for one instant doubted my companion's honesty of purpose, that I trusted him wholly, entirely. I asked no questions but, believing in him, followed where he led.

It seemed a very long time before we reached the desired window, which was really close at hand. Inside a light burned low, making it easier to enter quietly. Dr. Despard led me across the room to a door on the opposite side. This opened upon the back staircase. Closing it behind us we were in total darkness, but, although moving very slowly, Dr. Despard guided me downward as though he knew his way well. We did not stop at the first floor, but passing through the pantry, went on down the second flight to the basement. I noticed that these stairs, like those we had just left, were thickly carpeted.

Below, a faint light was visible. This served to show the heavily barred outside door and the shadow of Zayma's cat, Ebenezer, silhouetted against the wall. Uttering a cry of welcome he slid forward toward Dr. Despard, then, catching sight of me, halted, staring with dilated yellow eyeballs. Evidently disturbed by the creature's wakefulness, Dr. Despard pushed me back into the blind staircase and, controlling his labored breathing with manifest effort, stood motionless, listening. Satisfied after a moment that the cat kept vigils alone, he drew me quickly to the door, unbarred it with the noiseless precision of

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long practice, and, mounting the steps of the area, moved into the black shadow of the spruces. Here he stopped, sighing deeply. I thought in relief that his task was done.

Because of the darkness through which we had come the outside world seemed bright, though lighted by the stars only. My courage had returned. I felt eager to be away. The night was waning fast, I must hasten. I lifted the hand that still held mine—the hand that had freed me—to my lips.

"Thank you," I murmured. "God bless you; good-bye!"

But instead of loosening his grasp he started forward, as though to go with me.

"No, no," I whispered, "you must not come further. I am safe now. You are ill—and your feet are bare!"

"I began life barefoot on my father's farm," he said, in slow labored accents, while he moved steadily on beside me, still holding fast my hand, "and I will end it barefoot here. My father was an upright man—" He ceased speaking. Then I heard him murmur under his breath, as though he were but thinking aloud: "I will arise and go to my father—" And again, after a long silence: "I will arise and go to my father——"

Although alone I could have run fleetly, I dared not again suggest leaving my companion, but, suiting my pace to his, went on slowly, slowly across the grass. His manner was so strange that uncanny thoughts took possession of me, dominated me. They said to me that were this his atonement, it would be ungenerous to lessen it by continuing my journey without his further help. He might think that I doubted his ability to save me. So desirous did I become of hiding my wish for haste that I strove to lag behind a little, that he might feel his was



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the greater strength. And I suffered much; my heart straining at the leash in its mad desire for speed.

Arrived at the edge of the open line of avenue just above the stables, Dr. Despard halted. On the opposite side of the road a thicket of fruit-trees offered a shelter. But to reach it one must cross the open space.

"Go over first," he commanded, "and wait under the trees. Your white dress may betray you to Jasper, who is now outside the house on guard. He may be where he will spy you. If he starts in chase I will stop him. Do you, meanwhile, skirt the garden, climb the wall, cross the high-road, and go down over the fields toward the north-east. A mile from the road is a farm-house. Make for it. That is your one chance." I would have started but he detained me. "If you are *not* seen," he said, "I will join you. Wait for me."

"Yes," I said, and flitted across the road, on among the trees. There I paused, and gave battle to an almost irresistible desire to fly. The farm-house was but a mile distant. Mr. Lannion had said that the nearest dwelling was two miles away!

The south-west wind swept through the tree-tops with an inspiring rush onward. It was a wild night, although warm, and filled with summer scents. And the hurrying breeze had infected all nature with its own reckless haste. The branches above me swayed restlessly, sighing over their inability to follow on through the night. And I, who had entered on a race for life, stood trembling with eagerness for the starting signal.

From the direction of the distant woodland there now came the baying of dogs. I had forgotten the Great Danes. Was the sound coming nearer? My impatience had become an anguish when Dr. Despard

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joined me, and without a word we continued our journey. We rounded the hedged-in garden and made our slow way toward a part of the farm unknown to me. This was where the board fence on the high-road ended, giving place to a low stone wall. Suddenly the doctor stopped.

"Hist!" he cautioned. "What was that?"

The breeze brought the sound plainly. Steps upon the avenue, now some distance behind us.

"The dogs!" I said, as I recognized the scuffling rush along the gravel. "They are playing as they run."

We recommenced our pilgrimage. I noticed that Dr. Despard now strove to hasten his pace. Presently we reached the wall, climbed it, crossed the road, and entered the rough fields opposite. Here there were no trees to screen our flight. The land sloped abruptly downward. Dr. Despard, after searching carefully, struck into what seemed a mere sheep track. The little path was very slippery. I begged him to use my shoulder as support and, although unwilling, he was soon obliged to do so. The stars shone down upon us with gentle glances, their brilliancy softened by the misty atmosphere brought inland by the sea-breeze. The lichen-covered rocks, upcropping here and there on near and distant hill-sides, took on odd shapes.

"I shall have to rest a moment," exclaimed my companion suddenly, in despairing accents.

I found a seat for him upon a neighboring rock and stood by him in silence, pity warring with my selfish desire for haste. At this moment there came from the road above the sound of a horse's hoofs. The doctor struggled to his feet.

"Rollis?" he gasped.

But the unseen rider followed the high-road steadily.

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"Come," said Dr. Despard, "we have no time to lose!"

"Let me go on alone," I pleaded, "and do you return to Ornith Farm."

"I cannot," he said shortly. "I have betrayed my friend——"

The path seemed to lengthen out interminably; but at last, when I had almost lost hope, we came suddenly upon an old farm-house nestling against the hill. At the same instant Dr. Despard stumbled heavily, strove to regain his footing, then, in spite of my efforts to support him, sank to the ground. His overtaxed strength had given way.

I lifted his head and fanned him with my handkerchief.

"Go on"—he spoke with difficulty, struggling to retain consciousness—"knock—say that you are—Hope—" He sank back, fainting.

I obeyed quickly. A picket fence shut off a garden strip before the old gray house. Opening the little gate I ran up on the porch and knocked loudly. No answer. Realizing my folly in having chosen the front door, I hastened to the kitchen wing. There, fetching a big stone, I pounded upon the door with all my strength. A dog in the barn barked furiously, and a light appeared in one of the lower windows of the house. I knocked again.

"Help," I cried. "Oh, help!"

The window was partly raised, and a woman's voice demanded my name and what I wanted.

"I am Hope Carmichael," I answered. Before I could explain further the window was shut smartly and the light disappeared.

I was in despair. The dog at the barn never ceased his warning clamor. Were Mr. Lannion in pursuit he would need no better guide. I must make a second appeal. As I raised my hand the door was

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unbarred and opened, and an elderly woman appeared on the threshold. She held a lamp in her hand and wore a petticoat and shawl over her nightgown. There was a certain dignity about the short figure in spite of its odd apparel. And as I looked into the high-colored face I thought its expression kind.

"I am Hope Carmichael," I repeated, with a catch in my throat that I could not control—for what if she should send me away!

The woman lifted her lamp high and subjected me to a searching scrutiny. Then extending her arm, she caught my hand and drew me in, at the same time calling out, in clear tones of command:

"Ezra, Ezra!"

She placed the lamp upon the table and turned to lock the door.

"No, no," I cried hastily; "there is some one ill outside. Dr. Despard brought me—he has fainted. Please help me carry him in!"

"Dr. Despard!" exclaimed the woman in shocked surprise. "Ezra, Ezra, make haste!" And saying that she would get a blanket she passed into an inner room.

Before she returned a curly-headed boy of twelve tumbled unceremoniously into the kitchen. He had waited only long enough to pull his trousers on over his night-shirt before responding to her summons.

"What's wrong, gran'ma?" he asked as he burst in; but no sooner did he catch sight of me than he came to an abrupt halt.

"Hope Carmichael!" he exclaimed in an awed whisper.

"By God's grace, yes," said his grandmother, re-entering. She had taken time to slip on a decent black skirt. Over her arm she carried a blanket. "Dr. Despard's outside, Ezra," she explained.

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"Help me get him in. Where is he?" She turned to me.

I ran back to where I had left my companion, urging those with me to haste. When they heard that we feared pursuit, they made all speed possible. Dr. Despard lay quite still. It was as though we had come for the dead. The boy and his grandmother lifted him from the ground and placed him on the blanket, then carried it hammock-wise. I was told to precede them.

"I want to see you ahead of me," the old woman insisted when I wished to help.

Gaining the house, Dr. Despard was taken into the inner room and laid upon a bed. I stayed behind to close and bar the kitchen door. It was then that I discovered that my handkerchief was gone. I had last used it to fan the sick man. I searched everywhere upon the floor, but I dared not venture outside to look for it. Its loss worried me.

I found the old woman and her grandson busied in the effort to restore Dr. Despard to consciousness. It seemed long before he responded to their homely skill, and when at last he opened his heavy eyes he did not know us. He looked about him strangely, then spoke.

"I will arise—and go to my father——"

His voice trailed away into a murmur; his eyelids fell. The old woman moistened his lips with a stimulant. The breeze, entering the open casement, blew the muslin curtain to and fro, and fanned the white face upon the high-heaped pillows. He spoke again.

"I will arise"—his voice was so very weary—"and go—to my father——"

He tried to sit up. The old woman passed her arm around him, raised him; he looked about the room, saw me, and remembered. He glanced anxiously from the woman to the boy.

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"Call Stephens, call your son!" he commanded, in feeble but insistent tones.

"David is away," was the quiet answer.

"You and Ezra——?"

"All the folks there is," said Mrs. Stephens, completing his sentence. "But don't fret, doctor, we'll take care of you."

"Close the shutters—put out the light—" (he gasped for breath after each word); "don't give her up——"

"No, no," said Mrs. Stephens soothingly, while Ezra drew in the shutters, and turning the lamp low carried it into a shaded corner. "She's safe with us, poor child! No one will think to look for her here."

"Oh, my God!" groaned Dr. Despard, "she does not understand—" He struggled to sit erect, he lifted his right hand. "Listen—bear witness," he said.

His faltering accents proved how terrible was the exertion he made. An effort, I knew, requiring as much moral as physical force, since he must denounce a friend.

"I am dying," he almost whispered, "and I swear before God—that this young girl—is mentally sound. She is Mary Carmichael—she is—Hope—" He fell back exhausted, but his eyes still rested upon my face.

Mrs. Stephens placed him with gentle strength upon his pillows, then slipped to my side.

"Who's after you?" she asked softly.

"Mr. Lannion," I said.

She looked incredulous, then scrutinized my face as though she would search my very soul. The boy touched her on the arm.

"Gran'ma," he said, "I'm goin' for the sheriff. I'll ride the sorrel, and go by the valley road." The woman's troubled face cleared. "I loaned my gun

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to Jake, and I'm sorry I did now," Ezra continued, "for father's is pretty old. But I'll load it ready—all the same." He vanished into the kitchen as he finished speaking.

"Ezra has decided right," said the grandmother, looking after the boy with a proud smile. "He'll fetch the sheriff, don't you be afraid."

"Hope!" Dr. Despard called faintly, "Hope!"

I ran to him, knelt beside the bed, took his cold hands in mine. I did not know that death was so near.

"Courage, Dr. Despard!" I cried. "The dawn is almost here. We shall soon be safe."

I think that he did not hear me.

"Hope!" he said softly, "Hope!" Then, drawing his hands from mine, he cried in an eager whisper: "I will arise—and go to my father. I will arise—and go—to my father."

There was silence for a long moment; a silence so profound that the steps of the boy making his swift and almost noiseless preparations in the adjoining room, seemed to reëcho loudly through the quiet house. Suddenly the sick man sat erect, staring into space as though some one had entered whom we only could not see.

"Father!" he cried hoarsely. "Oh, father! I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Mrs. Stephens caught him in her arms. His head drooped forward upon his breast.

"God has taken him," she said simply, as she laid her burden down with reverent care. "He is dead."

## XXVI

As I gazed with tear-dimmed eyes into the quiet face of the man who had expended his last strength in my service, Ezra spoke from the doorway.

"Gran'ma," he said, "I'm off. Father's gun is here on the table, loaded."

His grandmother went with him into the kitchen. I felt that I ought not to follow, yet I did so. Ezra, his eyes upon me, spoke again to his grandmother, too shy to ask the question of me direct.

"Who's huntin' her?" he demanded in a whisper.

"She says—Mr. Lannion," was the doubtful answer.

The boy was evidently struck by the accent of partial disbelief, for he said quickly: "Then don't let him in. It won't do him no harm to wait till the sheriff comes. Let the sheriff decide. I'll bring him, don't you fear." He nodded encouragingly to me, and laid his hand on the bar of the door. "Gran'ma," he said pleadingly, "promise you won't give her up to nobody but the sheriff—promise you won't let no one in!"

"You don't need to ask it," said Mrs. Stephens mildly. "With God's help we'll both do our duty." She kissed him solemnly, and cautiously drew the bolt herself. "Don't fret about gran'ma, Ezra," she whispered; "if need be, I'll use the gun."

I stood still when he had gone, listening, first to the dog's glad welcome, then to the light sound of the sorrel's hoofs on soft turf. Next there floated up from below the faint thud, thud, that told me Ezra



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was keeping to the grassy edge of the high-road, as he galloped away.

Going to the table I took up the gun and extinguished the candle. Mrs. Stephens returned as I did so, carrying the lamp. She had busied herself closing the windows in the room occupied by the dead.

"We're best upstairs," she whispered, "but we'll barricade a bit here first. Can you shoot?" she added, seeing the gun in my hands.

"I think so—if I have to," I said.

Laying it down, I helped her move the heavy kitchen table against the door. This done we passed into the narrow hall of the house. Here Mrs. Stephens paused to point toward a poster fastened on the wall, upon which was a rough picture and a full description of

### THE MISSING MARY CARMICHAEL— CALLED "HOPE."

"That's how we knew you," she said, and led the way upstairs.

Going into the little hall bedroom directly above the front door, she opened the window and bowed the shutters, then put out the lamp.

"The dawn is close at hand," she said, "and we're best without a light. Do you peek through the shutters—you're eyes are young."

The stars had paled; the south-west wind was sinking to rest. The flowers in the strip of garden below, and the honeysuckle that clambered over the roof of the old-fashioned porch, filled the air with sweetness. As I looked from between the shutters, straining eyes and ears alike, Mrs. Stephens began to talk. She had seated herself close behind me; she held the gun across her knees.

"I can't understand about Mr. Lannion," she

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mused. "That bill says you're held for money—and he's a rich man."

"You won't give me up?" I pleaded, turning from the window.

"No," she said, "I won't. But I'm free to confess that I can't make it out. Mr. Lannion's a rich man. He's been a good neighbor to me."

My heart sank. "If you would let me have the gun?" I suggested timidly. I longed to get it into my own hands.

"I wish David wasn't away," she said, "and I wish Ezra hadn't loaned his gun to Jake. Jake's our hired man," she explained. "He's gone home for a couple of days. Well, we've got to do the best we can. No, I'll keep the gun. I could shoot when I was a girl——"

"Hush!" I murmured.

The dog at the barn was sounding a low note of warning. In the gray twilight neighboring objects had become dully visible. The lichen-covered boulders, between which ran the narrow track Dr. Despard and I had so lately travelled, showed in separate masses upon the hill above the house. The dog, silent for an instant, now gave vent to a gruff bark.

"Rover's uneasy," whispered my companion. "Some one's round." A moment of intense watchfulness followed. "Perhaps only some beast——" Mrs. Stephens muttered as if speaking to herself. "I wish Ezra had thought to bring the dog inside; but no, if he had we couldn't pretend not to hear in case——"

She broke off abruptly. Down the dusky hillside there slipped two shadows. Rover gave tongue. He barked loudly, fiercely. The two men advanced toward the house, then paused, whispering together.

"Mr. Lannion and his man—the Injun-darky?" Mrs. Stephens asked.

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"Yes," I said.

They had finished their short consultation. Jasper disappeared around the corner of the house; Mr. Lannion, opening the garden gate, came up on the porch and knocked. The dog barked himself hoarse. Mr. Lannion, hardly waiting for an answer, knocked again, this time very loudly. Mrs. Stephens neither spoke nor moved. Again Mr. Lannion waited an instant, then knocked unceasingly.

"I've got to answer now," said Mrs. Stephens. "You stand aside, and don't you say a word." She fumbled with the shutters as if feeling for their fastenings, then asked who was there.

"Mr. Lannion," came the quick response. "Is that Mrs. Stephens?" He left the porch as he spoke, moving back toward the gate that he might look up at the window.

"Yes, sir," she said civilly, opening the shutters so that he might see her, but not flinging them wide. "What brings you here at this hour?"

"My ward, Miss Darling, has wandered from home," was the answer. "Did she come here?"

"No, sir," said Mrs. Stephens steadily.

"The poor child is deranged," continued Mr. Lannion, "and her insanity has lately taken a new form. She imagines herself to be the Miss Carmichael whose picture has been in all the newspapers—the young girl who is supposed to have been kidnapped because of her large fortune. My poor Aimée resembles her closely—being slight and blonde. Where is your son?"

"David is away," said Mrs. Stephens. I thought that a note of anxiety had crept into her voice.

"Are you alone in the house?" Mr. Lannion asked.

"None of my family are at home," was the evasive answer.

"You would not deceive me, I am sure, Mrs.

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Stephens," said Mr. Lannion. "You and I have been good neighbors for two years now."

"No, sir," said Mrs. Stephens, her voice more troubled than before; "I wouldn't willingly deceive anybody."

My heart sank. Her manner, her evident distress of mind, gave me the keenest anxiety. Added to this was my fear in regard to my lost handkerchief. I had played too many games where clues were purposely dropped not to realize the importance of this bit of embroidered cambric.

Mrs. Stephens drew in the shutter nearest me as if to indicate that the interview was over.

"If you stand on a chair," she whispered, "you can peek out of the slit above." Then calling "Good-bye, Mr. Lannion, good-bye, sir!" she was closing the other shutter when Jasper came swiftly from behind the house.

Mrs. Stephens sighed as in relief. From my vantage-point I looked down through the half-moon cut in the upper part of the old-fashioned shutter upon the strip of fenced-in garden and, outside its open gate, the two men. Mr. Lannion had turned away convinced apparently that his quarry had flown farther, when Jasper ran up. The man said nothing, but in his usual stolid manner held out my missing handkerchief. Mr. Lannion, uttering an exclamation of delight, caught it from him and reentered the gate. I moaned involuntarily.

"Humph!" muttered my companion; "I mistrusted that Injun was up to some mischief—conjurin' behind backs where he couldn't be seen. Well"—again she sighed in relief—"it's somethin' to know the worst, anyway!"

Mr. Lannion stood still and held up the handkerchief. He was just beyond the porch, where he could command the window.

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"You see, Mrs. Stephens!" he spoke quietly. "This is proof positive that my ward is in your house. I don't blame you for believing the poor child's story, but I must beg you to let me see her at once. Please come down and open the door."

"I believe in law and order, Mr. Lannion," said Mrs. Stephens mildly. "Do you go home and wait till daytime. Then fetch a couple of doctors to show the young lady is insane, and lawyers to prove your right as guardian, and I'll give her up fast enough."

Mr. Lannion was silent a moment. Then went to Jasper, who was waiting outside, and gave him some order. The man again betook himself to the back of the house. Mr. Lannion returned to his former post.

"I hoped for a kinder welcome, Mrs. Stephens," he said reproachfully. "You were glad enough to see me when I brought Dr. Despard to your daughter-in-law's sick-bed last winter. I came in the small hours then, but you made haste to let me in."

(It seemed to me that he was talking against time. What task had been set Jasper? I slipped down from my chair and out into the dark hall.)

"How is the doctor—why didn't you bring him this time?" asked Mrs. Stephens, in tones so calmly conversational that I marvelled at her self-control.

"He is ill," was the answer. "He suggested the chance of my finding our lost lamb here, and took comfort in the thought that you would shelter her. If he were with me he would convince you of the truth of my statement. You would believe him."

"Yes," said Mrs. Stephens; "I believe him."

"Then you will let me in?" cried Mr. Lannion. "I knew that you would hear reason at last!"

There came from below an odd sound, a soft tinkle, as of the falling of glass. I moved into the bedroom and shut the door. I knew that Mrs. Stephens heard me, although she did not turn her

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head, for she said, as though yielding to Mr. Lannion's insistence:

"Well, just wait where you are a minute, Mr. Lannion," and closing the shutter came quickly to my side. "The Injun?" she questioned.

"Yes," I said; "he is breaking in."

She locked the door and, with my help, pushed a heavy clothes-press against it. Returning to the window she again opened one shutter and reseated herself, the gun across her knees. I resumed my former position. Mr. Lannion had not stirred. He looked up now in astonishment.

"Why, Mrs. Stephens!" he exclaimed, "I thought you were going to let me in! I had even begun to hope that you would treat me to some of your delicious home-made cake. This is the hungriest hour of the twenty-four. Come, Mrs. Stephens"—he still spoke with affected *bonhomie*—"don't serve a neighbor so unkindly!"

"Your Injun can help you to my best," said Mrs. Stephens sternly. "'Tis you sent him to enter in—a thief in the night. As for pies and cake, God knows I love to give them to folks, yet when He wills that I give instead bitter medicine, He steadies my hand—even as I have faith that He will strengthen it in case of need. Don't come a step nearer, Mr. Lannion! This porch could be easy climbed, I know, but you stay where you are." As she ceased speaking she lifted the gun, resting its muzzle on the sill.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Lannion, stepping back; "you would shoot me, Mrs. Stephens?"

"Yes, sir," came the steady answer, "if obliged to, so make no mistake. Dr. Despard brought Hope Carmichael here; with his last breath he bore witness. He lies dead downstairs."

I saw Mr. Lannion start violently. "That is a lie!" he said.

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The knob of the door was suddenly tried by a strong hand. Jasper had made his stealthy way upstairs. Mrs. Stephens heard him.

"All of my house save this one room," she said, "is now open to you. Since you doubt my word, enter, and disprove it." Mr. Lannion did not move. "You tell me that Dr. Despard lies ill at home," continued Mrs. Stephens, in her clear, firm voice. "I say to you that he came here, giving up his life to bring this poor child into safety. Forget not the words of our Lord: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

A soft pink flush stole across the cold gray of the landscape. From the south came the faint sound of a bell.

"The court-house bell!" breathed Mrs. Stephens. "Ezra's there safe. O Almighty God, grant that we may endure till help comes!"

Jasper thrust his dark head from the window of the room adjoining.

"Door's locked," he said laconically.

"Get an axe and break it down," was the brief order.

Save for the hoarse barking of the half-crazed dog in the barn, and the now unceasing note of encouragement from the distant town, there was silence. Mr. Lannion did not speak until the crash of the axe told him that Jasper was at work.

"I am sorry to use force, Mrs. Stephens," he said, "but you drive me to it. Aimée!" I did not answer. "I know that you are there," he went on, an accent of anxiety in his voice. "See that you stand well aside when the door gives." I remained silent. "Mrs. Stephens"—he spoke with sudden sharpness—"for the last time, will you give up my ward?"

"No," she said.

He ran toward the low porch. Mrs. Stephens fired.

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But she had aimed poorly, and, although the shot scattered wide, Mr. Lannion was not touched. His harsh laugh told me that this dash forward had been but a *ruse de guerre* to empty the gun. The clumsy weapon had kicked badly, striking Mrs. Stevens and hurting her. I caught it from her quickly.

"For God's sake put that down!" cried Mr. Lannion, as, leaning from the window, I took careful aim. "It may burst and kill you. Put it down, Aimée!"

He spoke with his customary imperiousness. It was as if he failed to realize the condition of things. I dared not take my eyes from his face. There was but one charge left in the gun. I must shoot at close range. But if Jasper got in before help came, he would wrest the weapon from me. I strained my ears for the sound of approaching hoof-beats. I heard but the court-house bell.

Mr. Lannion came a step nearer.

"Stop!" I cried.

"Nonsense, child," he said, smiling, but he stood still. "Come"—he spoke coaxingly, tenderly—"put down that clumsy thing and let's be friends again! I swear I won't harass or worry you in any way, if you'll only make it up with me, if you'll only come home."

I heard the door crash splintering in; I saw Mr. Lannion run hastily forward; I pulled the trigger. No report followed. The gun had missed fire.

Then, desperate, I leaned far from the window and cried for help—cried shrilly, determinately, wildly. The rocky hillside gave back the sound, and from the distance came the steady, urgent note of the court-house bell.

I heard Mr. Lannion commanding me to be quiet. I saw him start on a run toward the back of the house. I knew that he would be in the room in an-



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other instant, and I knew also that behind me stood Jasper, ready to catch and hold me should I attempt to fling myself from the window before his master came. And all the time I never once ceased in my frantic appeal for aid.

The sun, rising grandly, now flooded all the world with light, and I saw Mr. Lannion halt as he reached the corner of the house. Then my voice died suddenly—its strength failed. For pouring down over the steep hillside came a little troop of horsemen. They rode at break-neck speed, each man apparently actuated by but one desire, to reach the farm in time.

Mr. Lannion stood quite still, staring at two men, who, distancing the others, now rode first. One of them reined up his horse so soon as he came within speaking distance.

"Game's up, Lannion!" he cried. "Better surrender quietly."

The other rider came straight on. The sun lighted up his firm figure, irradiated his eager, clear-cut face. I forgot Mr. Lannion, forgot his threat. I leaned far, far from the window; I held out my arms.

"Max!" I cried. "Oh, Max!"

Mr. Lannion sprang forward, raised his revolver, fired.

The knowledge of what I had done closed down upon my senses like a pall, dulling them, blinding my vision. And it was as if that one report would reverberate forever in my ears! I tried to shut it out, but the effort was beyond me. And for a time I did not know where I was nor what had befallen me. All was a blank.

When my mind awoke I was upon a lounge drawn close to an open window. From below rose the scent

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of crushed flowers and the hushed murmur of many voices. Beside me knelt Max.

Max owed his escape to his fine horsemanship. He had swung himself Indian fashion from the saddle as Mr. Lannion fired, and the bullet passed harmlessly above him. And I had in reality heard many shots. The sheriff, seeing Mr. Lannion about to fire again, had acted quickly. The men with him, overexcited, followed his lead. Mr. Lannion had fallen, riddled with bullets—dying as dies a hunted wild beast.

The hum outside grew louder. Mrs. Stephens, who had left us alone together directly I recovered consciousness, now returned, bringing a glass of fresh milk. She beamed upon us as Max held it to my lips.

"There's a crowd here!" she said proudly to Max. "The whole countryside will be comin' soon, I guess, to have a look at your Miss Hope Carmichael. She's been our Hope Carmichael, too," she added, with a sudden break in her voice, a suspicious moisture dimming her kind eyes, "ever since we read her story in the newspapers. Do you think you could just peek out a minute at 'em, dear?" she asked, turning to me. "They're about crazy to see you."

Max lifted me in his strong arms that I might look from the window—and it seemed to me that there were people everywhere. When they caught sight of me there came an odd hush, followed by a chorus of kindly greeting that I shall never forget. I waved my hand, I tried to thank them, I could not—my heart was too full. So Max spoke for me.

They cheered him when he ceased speaking. Then they cheered me and, being now in the spirit for jubilant demonstration, cheered for Mrs. Stephens and her plucky grandson, Ezra. In the midst of the noise a carriage was seen to turn in from the road

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below. Some word was passed from mouth to mouth and the horses that drew the vehicle had little to do, for a crowd of men pushed it upward by main force. I felt Max's arms tighten around me. I looked on in wondering interest while a dozen friendly hands tore open the carriage door and helped a woman to alight. I saw that she was a woman of middle age, a squarely built woman whose hair was strained tightly back from strongly marked features.

I broke away from Max, I descended the stairs in one rush, I was out in the world of sunshine and flowers and upon the bosom of my Katie, who had come to take me home.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

A woman's clear voice rose on the sweet morning air. Another moment and all joined in. Presently I, too, was singing, pouring out my whole soul in thankfulness to God.

## XXVII

*"Hope Carmichael is at  
Ornith Farm  
Westchester County  
New York  
come for her quick  
A freind"*

So ran the note that my dear Roddy contrived to post to Max. How the child managed this I do not know. I have never alluded to it because of what the detectives found when they searched Ornith Farm. The "outfit" of which Mr. Lannion had spoken in such pride was one for the making of counterfeit money. This was the business in which he had been successfully engaged for some years. Dr. Despard, Tom King, and a few others were his associates.

The suspicions of the police had been for some time circling about Mr. Lannion. And although Roddy's communication was thought by them valueless in regard to my case—many such having already led them to mare's-nests—it gave them the long desired opportunity of visiting Ornith Farm.

To Katie, however, the childish letter had rung true, and Max had needed no urging to make him follow any clew offered. So when Ezra started on his journey to the town by the valley road, Max, with the sheriff and his posse, were travelling up the hills toward Ornith Farm. Here Nanny, her fear of the law greater even than her dread of Zayma, had told them of my flight and Mr. Lannion's pursuit.

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The news of my being at the Stephens' had spread like wild-fire, and my story had long since touched the warm heart of the people. Max and I will never forget the sympathy shown us at this supreme moment of our lives.

We have had the great happiness of seeing Roddy grow into a wise and useful man. We sent him to school and to college, and later gave him a few years of study in Europe. He now holds a professorship in one of our finest universities. He is always with us in the summers, and will, we hope, consider our home his own until he chooses to marry.

Mrs. Despard changed her name a year after her husband's death, marrying a former playmate, who had become a person of importance in the neighboring town. She was well pleased to transfer to us the guardianship of her son, and even consented to his dropping the d from his middle name.

Once a year, in mid-July, there comes to me a gift of flowers. With them is always a slip of paper bearing these printed words:

Wherever she set her blessed foot, there was at once a dewy flower. The violets gushed up along the wayside.

I know that it is Tom King who thus remembers me, and I like to believe that he has found peace in leading an upright life, with Mother Earth as teacher and consoler.

I am a very happy woman. So happy, indeed, that at times I feel afraid, having known sudden shipwreck. And because of the seeds of evil—the Pomegranate Seeds of Ornith Farm—the world can never again be quite the same to me. If Proserpina paid heavily for the six pomegranate seeds that passed her lips, I, too, pay for the six weeks spent in captivity. The knowledge I then learned of life's shadows must ever remain to dim its sunshine.

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And my poor Katie suffers too.

"The Lord's Prayer has grown hard to me, thin!" she sadly complains at times. "For howiver am I to win forgiveeness for me own sins when I çanna forgie the sins o' ithers? Sure it's fire an' breemstone I'm wishin' for that villain, an' no mistake! Yet God saw till't that he had an awfu' hell on earth! You so near hand—in his very house—yet far off as heav'n. 'Fore God, I'm a wicked woman, thin, for if I get to heavin an' see that man forninst me, I'll awa down to hell! But I'm thinkin' the old wolf-hound will niver let him troo heav'n's gates. Hope, my bairn, can you forgie him?"

At last, after the lapse of years, I am able to answer—"Yes."



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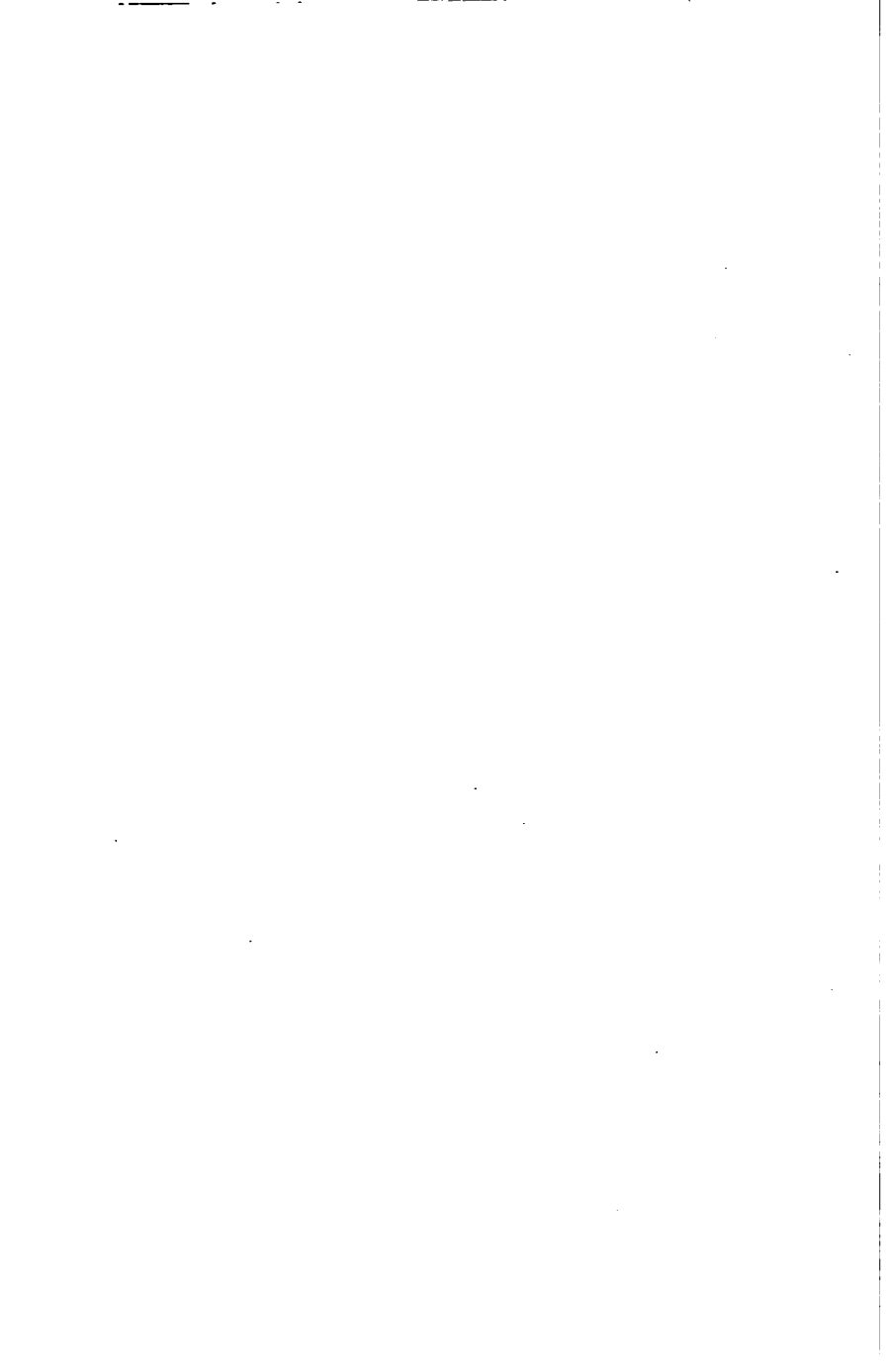
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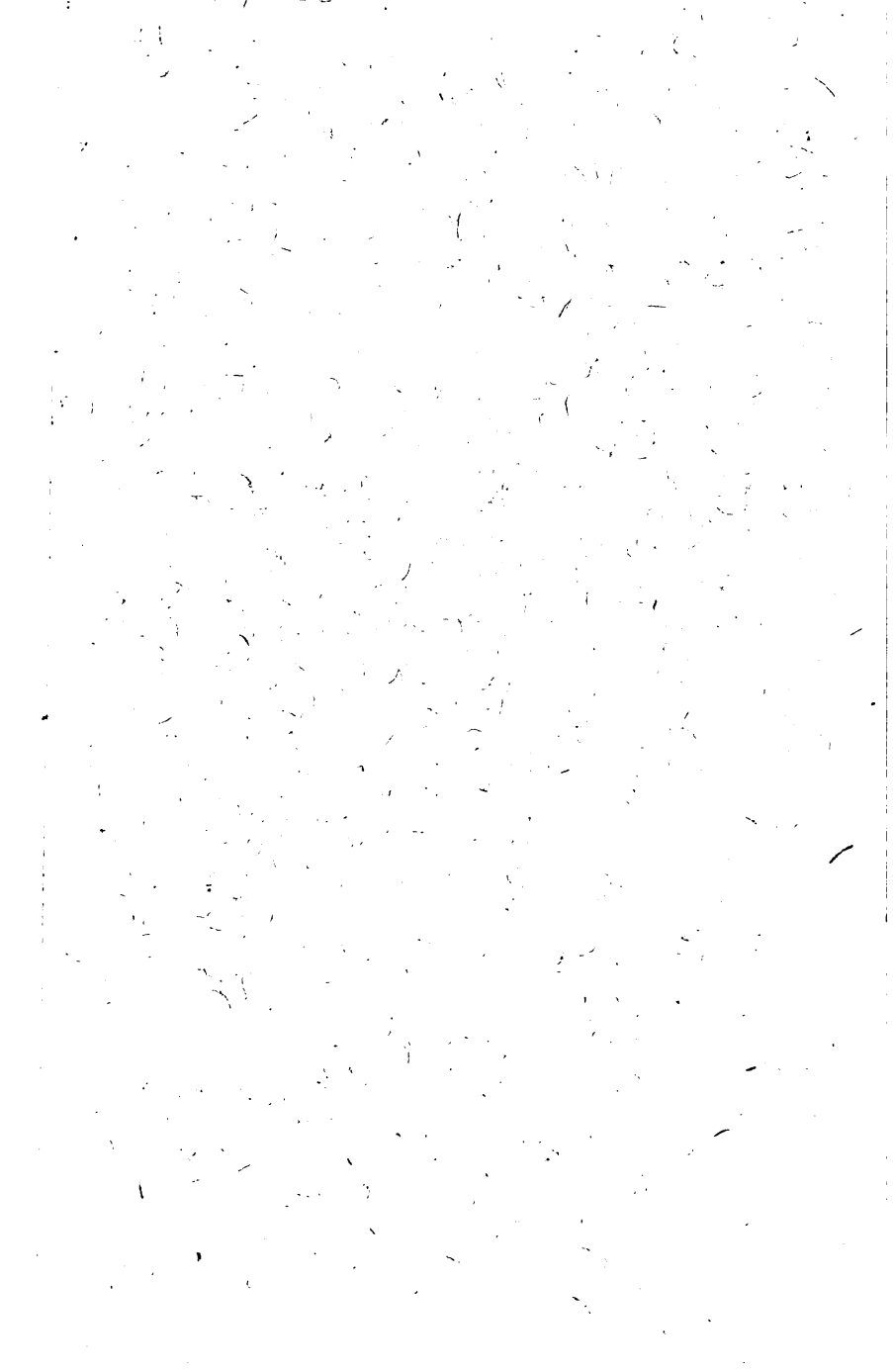
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